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RETREATS FOR PRIESTS

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RETREATS FOR PRIESTS

According to the method and plan of the Spiritual Exercises of S. Ignatius

BY

W. H. LONGRIDGE, S.S.J.E.

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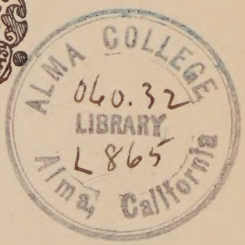

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PREFACE

THE Retreats contained in this volume are intended primarily for priests, who, by choice or by necessity, make their retreats alone. But it is hoped that they may also be useful to conductors of corporate retreats, as illustrating the way in which the *Spiritual Exercises* of S. Ignatius may be adapted to ecclesiastical retreats of various lengths.

The first retreat is of twelve days, the second of four, and the third of three. The first may be shortened to a retreat of ten days, and the second to one of three days. I have indicated, in each case, how this may be done without disturbing the proper sequence of subjects.

I have made the first retreat considerably longer than has been customary among us, because I believe that it will be very profitable for most priests to make a retreat of ten or twelve days two or three times in the course of their ministry. Many of the French bishops are now urging their clergy to do this. Besides the diocesan retreats of three or four days, which most of the clergy are required to attend annually or at least every alternate year, the bishops consider that something more is needed. They desire to get their priests to make a retreat of at least ten days, under an experienced director, either individually or in small groups, at certain epochs of their ministerial life. The first occasion for such a retreat might be two or three years after ordination, so that the faults of youth and inexperience could be corrected. A second would be in middle life, when the parish priest may need to have his zeal and aspirations after a life of real union with God renewed, or to be encouraged to persevere under the burden of anxieties, disillusionment, and temptations of various kinds. And a third would be appropriate at the approach of old age, as a preparation for a good death.

One great advantage of these longer retreats will be that the director will be able to see each of his retreatants several times during the retreat, and to give to each that

individual care and direction which is not possible in a retreat of only three or four days.

Moreover, in a short retreat the time is often insufficient for the attainment of the essential object. That object is not merely to purify the soul from sin, but also to renew in it the spirit of the priestly vocation, and to lead it onward towards perfection ; and this will often require more time and more meditations than a short retreat can provide. Mgr. Perriot has said with great truth, 'One of the most serious practical errors with regard to retreats is to think that the whole purpose and value of a retreat consists in a review of the past and a good confession. That is no doubt a necessary part of a retreat, but it is only the removal of an obstacle, not the building up of anything for the future. It is rather a preparation for retreat than the retreat itself. The true work of the retreat does not begin till the soul, freed from every obstacle, is able to elevate itself towards God and submit itself to the action of His Spirit.'[1] A short retreat, however moving and impressive the meditations and instructions of the conductor may be, is often quite insufficient to effect the change needed in the retreatant, who has perhaps never learnt or has forgotten the method of mental prayer, or who has abandoned the practice of it. A prolonged and laborious effort is needed, and it is only when the retreatant has begun again the habit of meditation that the fruit of his retreat will be durable.

Still more will this be the case, if the priest has to be reclaimed from a life of sin or serious neglect of his responsibilities. To rely upon the passing emotions kindled by a few fervent addresses, listened to with more or less attention in a three or four days' retreat, will, in most cases, only lead to failure and disappointment. It is not merely listening to addresses that will effect the needed transformation, but a profound meditation on the great truths of religion and the essential duties of the priestly vocation, carried on in the solitude and silence of a prolonged retreat, and issuing in well-considered and firm resolutions. 'The principal agent in a sacerdotal retreat,' says Mgr. Rougerie, Bishop of Pamiers, 'is the priest himself. The preacher, however eloquent he may be, is in reality only the helper of the

[1] *Ami du Clergé*, 11 mai, 1893.

retreatant; and in truth the grace of God descends only upon him who turns the solitude of retreat to good account by personal meditation and fervent prayer.'[1] To the same effect Mgr. d'Hulst, in the opening address of a retreat, used often to say: 'Have I come to preach the retreat? No, but to help you to make it.'

The same eminent priest and experienced conductor, speaking of such prolonged retreats as we are advocating, and especially of those that are made by individuals in complete solitude, says: 'Those who have not tried this method have no idea of the unexpected resources it contains for the development of the spiritual life. One may be frightened beforehand at the prospect of long days face to face with oneself and God, and say to oneself, "If it is so difficult to spend a single hour in mental prayer, how shall I ever be able to keep up such an effort for several hours each day of a long retreat?" Vain fears! The Exercises are for the retreatant a surer guide and a more powerful support than any discourses. He who writes these lines has seen persons, strangers to all piety and still entangled in manifold sins, but desirous to get free, enter courageously upon this ordeal and pass through it with as much ease as happiness. It is here in this *tête-à-tête* with God, in this wonderfully combined series of interior acts, that the soul finds again the knowledge of its end, the horror of sin, the infinitely sweet grace of penitence, and then conceives the desire to follow Jesus Christ in the way He traces for us in the successive mysteries of His life and passion. It is here, in retreat, that the designs of God for the soul are revealed in the fruitful labour of the election. It is from retreat that the Christian comes forth renewed, armed for the struggle, and inflamed with zeal for the service of the Divine King.'[2]

In speaking of retreats for priests the *Directory* (ix. 10) says: 'The Exercises should be adapted so as to teach them what great virtues their state demands, and to awaken in them a desire of acquiring it, and sorrow if they have not hitherto possessed it. Therefore they must be directed in such a way as to lead them to resolve to put away their sins and evil affections, and to adorn themselves with the con-

[1] *Lettre à son Clergé*, 1894.
[2] *Vie de Just de Bretenières*, pp. 79, 80.

trary virtues ; remembering always that they are dedicated and consecrated to the service of God and His Church, and must therefore do their utmost to fulfil their duty,' labouring ' for the salvation of souls according to their strength and talents, as their office requires.'

There are two methods of making these adaptations : [1]

1. The special teachings, warnings, and exhortations which are suitable for priests may be given, apart from the meditations, in a series of instructions or conferences setting forth and enforcing the peculiar duties of a priest's interior life and external work.

2. The other method is to fuse the two elements, the instructions and the meditations, together ; in other words to treat the meditations in such a way as to bear upon the details of the priest's life and work, taking care however to preserve the order of the Ignatian Exercises and to include some at least, if there is not room for all, of the great fundamental meditations, sometimes called the Capital Exercises, viz. the Foundation, the Kingdom of Christ, the Two Standards, the Three Classes of Men, and the Three Modes or Degrees of Humility. These are indeed the most notable and distinctive feature of the *Spiritual Exercises*, forming a series of steps by which the retreatant is led on to the most generous dispositions, and to an entire surrender of himself to the will and call of God. And accordingly the truths which they teach, and the affections which they are intended to excite, should impregnate and season all the other meditations.

Of the first method I have given examples in the first and longest of the retreats contained in this book, and also in the two plans for an eight days' retreat in Appendix III, pp. 363, 364. In these retreats both the order and the subjects of the meditations conform strictly to the plan outlined by S. Ignatius, while the more special instructions bearing on the priest's life and work are given in Appendix II, and are intended to be *added at some other hour* to the three meditations appointed for each day ; or, if this is thought too exacting a programme, two meditations only may be given each day, the place of the third being taken by one of the instructions, preferably in the afternoon.

[1] See *Bibliothèque des Exercises*, No. 88, pp. 29–33.

In this case the director will have to decide which of the meditations can best be omitted.

The shorter retreats, of four or three days each, exemplify, for the most part, the second method, according to which the instructions and the meditations are more or less blended together. Many excellent examples of this method, well worth the study of all retreat conductors, will be found outlined in *Nouveaux Mélanges Oratoires*, Mgr. d'Hulst, Paris, Librairie Poussielgue, 1912.

If this latter method is used, the conductor must be careful that the element of special instruction does not predominate to such a degree that his addresses lose the character of meditations and become mere instructions or homilies on pastoral work; for, as the *Directory* (xxx. 3) says, 'It is by means of the meditations that the soul is strengthened and lifted up from earthly things, so as to become more fit for knowing the will of God and embracing it, and for overcoming all impediments; whereas, on the other hand, if the retreatant should cease from meditating, his soul would become darkened and enfeebled.' A certain mingling with the meditations of instruction on the particular duties of the priest may, no doubt, make the meditations more directly practical: on the other hand it is when the meditations are kept free from such instructions that they preserve more completely their proper character of spiritual exercises, in which the retreatant contemplates the Divine Model, and is moved through his affections to acts of the will and to prayer.

Besides the retreats, I have added three Appendices. The first contains fourteen additional meditations by means of which, in conjunction with those printed in the three retreats, a number of additional retreats may be arranged. The second consists of twelve instructions to be given to the retreatant at the discretion of the director. The third provides plans for eight additional retreats.

A few of the meditations in this book are the same, or partly the same, as some of those in my former book, *Ignatian Retreats for Lay People* (Mowbrays, 1926).

I desire to acknowledge my debt in some of the meditations, and especially in the instruction on the Divine Office, to the oral teaching of Father Benson, Founder and first

Superior-General of the Society of S. John the Evangelist, and in a few places to some of his books, now, I regret to say, out of print; also to M. Letourneau, *Le Guide du Prêtre*, Paris, Lecoffre, 1917, for some thoughts in the third retreat, and to Father Bull, our present Superior-General, for the instruction on the Priest's Rule of Life.

Lastly I desire to thank the Rev. J. W. F. Warren for much help in correcting the proof, and Mr. Robert Scott, Roxburghe House, Paternoster Row, for allowing me to print several quotations from my book, *The Spiritual Exercises of S. Ignatius of Loyola with a Commentary and Directory*, a book designed especially for the assistance of those who wish to learn how to conduct retreats according to the method and plan of S. Ignatius.

W. H. L.

OXFORD,
Feast of the Circumcision, 1930.

INTRODUCTION

THE *Spiritual Exercises* of S. Ignatius are intended primarily for use in retreat. More particularly their purpose is defined in the title : ' Spiritual Exercises whereby to conquer oneself, and order one's life, without being influenced in one's decision by any inordinate affection.' To order one's life according to the will of God, that is the purpose which the retreatant should have in view. He comes into retreat either to consider the question of his vocation, and to choose advisedly a state of life, whether it be the priesthood, or the religious life, or the ordinary life in the world ; or to reform, if need be, and to order his life in a state already chosen and fixed ; or simply to seek a renewal of fervour and to make progress in spiritual life. One or other of these objects must be the purpose of every retreat that is made according to the plan and method of S. Ignatius.

The Exercises are divided into four parts or ' Weeks ' as they are called. These are not fixed periods of seven days each, but successive stages through which the soul passes ; and each may be shortened or lengthened according as the retreatant more or less quickly gains the fruit proper to each. To make the Exercises fully, as they are laid down in the book, would require about a month ; but they may be shortened and adapted to retreats lasting only for a week, or even less. The several ' Weeks ' correspond roughly to the familiar division of the spiritual life into the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways.

The course opens with the consideration of the end of man and of creatures. This is called the Principle and Foundation, because from it are deduced all the practical truths which the subsequent Exercises teach, and upon it is built the whole fabric of the spiritual life, as S. Ignatius conceives it.

Then in the First Week, which corresponds to the purgative way, we are led to meditate upon sin and its consequences, in order that we may be thoroughly humbled in

shame and contrition, while at the same time our hearts are moved to wonder and gratitude as we realize the mercy and forbearance of God in sparing us till now, and giving us time for repentance and amendment.

The Second Week, which, with the Third, belongs to the illuminative way, is introduced with the meditation on the Kingdom of Christ, in which we contemplate our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Captain of our salvation, calling all men to follow Him in His warfare against sin, the world, and the devil. S. Ignatius says that this meditation will help us to contemplate the life of our Lord with profit. It will do this, because it will kindle in our hearts personal love and loyalty to Him as our Leader, and a desire and purpose to follow Him as closely as possible, cost what it may. And this is exactly the spirit and temper of mind in which we are to make all our meditations on the mysteries of His life and passion. We are to consider in all of them what Christ our Lord chose for Himself as the most perfect way of glorifying His Father, and what He would have us choose in order that we may follow Him most closely in whatever kind or state of life He may call each one of us to serve Him. Thus, while we meditate upon our Lord's life and teaching, we are to be on the watch for anything that may reveal to us what is our own vocation, or, if that is settled, what step onward towards perfection in our present state of life our Lord desires us to take.

To help us in this quest, S. Ignatius interjects in the course of our meditations three very important Exercises, which are intended to be an immediate preparation for making a good and sound Election.[1] These are the Two Standards, the Three Classes, and the Three Modes of Humility. If rightly made, they will help us to see more clearly what is our Lord's will for us, and at the same time to rid ourselves of any inordinate affections that may hinder us in obeying it. Then, after all this preparation, the Second Week ends with the Election itself, for our guidance in which elaborate rules are given.

In the Third Week, which is devoted to the contemplation

[1] i.e. the choice, according to the will of God, of a state of life, or the decision of some other grave and important matter. In most retreats a resolution will take the place of the Election.

of the Passion, we strengthen ourselves in our resolution, and prepare for all it may cost us, by contemplating the steadfastness, courage, and patience of our Lord in all His overwhelming sufferings and humiliations, even to the death of the Cross; while, at the same time, we deepen our contrition by the consideration that all this was endured for our own personal sins; and in grateful love we ask, each one of us, What ought I not only *to do*, but also *to suffer* for Him, who so 'loved me and gave Himself for me'?

In the Fourth Week, which pertains to the unitive way, we contemplate our risen and glorified Lord. We rejoice with Him in His great triumph and joy, and gather hope and courage for ourselves, who are called even now to live in the power of His resurrection, while we look forward to share His manifested glory hereafter in heaven.

Then, to crown all, S. Ignatius gives us an Exercise which he calls a 'Contemplation for obtaining Love.' We love God, because He first loved us, and has given us lavishly of what is His. All that we are and have is His gift: in response then to His love we can but give Him back what He has given us. 'Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will, all I have and possess. Thou hast given all this to me: to Thee, O Lord, I restore it; all is Thine, dispose of it entirely according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and grace, for this is enough for me.'

It is interesting to note that the outline of the course of the Exercises is already traced for us in the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author (or Captain, R.V. marg.) and Perfecter of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God' (chap. xii. 1, 2).

In conclusion, it should be remembered that the Exercises are designed especially for persons who are considering a possible vocation to the religious life, or who have already entered upon it and desire to press on to greater perfection in it. To these alone, as a general rule, they are to be given in all their completeness. But it is legitimate and profitable

to give them in part or with some modifications to many others, e.g. those who merely wish to set their consciences in order by a good confession, and to make a simple rule of life, which may help them to persevere in grace ; or those, again, who, coming into retreat year by year, desire to make progress in spiritual life. For we must not forget that S. Ignatius teaches that the very highest perfection of spiritual life is open to all, in whatever state of life God may call them to serve Him.

Anima Christi

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O Good Jesu, hear me ;
Within Thy wounds hide me ;
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee ;
From the malignant enemy defend me ;
In the hour of my death call me,
And bid me come to Thee,
That with Thy saints I may praise Thee
For ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer of S. Ignatius

Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will, all I have and possess. Thou hast given all this to me : to Thee, O Lord, I restore it ; all is Thine, dispose of it entirely according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and grace, for this is enough for me.

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THE NEED OF RETREAT

PREL. i. S. John Baptist in the wilderness preparing for the work of his ministry.

Prel. ii. Pray that you may be faithful to grace in this retreat.

I. OUR NEED OF RETREAT

We need from time to time to renew our spiritual life This need may be general or particular.

1. *General.* We are finite creatures, weak and frail, in danger of exhausting our spiritual strength in our ceaseless work for others. As the body needs the refreshment of food and sleep, so the soul needs repose and its appropriate refection : the repose of retreat, the food of meditation upon divine truth. In the manifold activities of a parish the difficulty is to do our work without losing sight of our own souls and their imperative needs. There is the danger of becoming exterior, forgetting the necessity of our own sanctification, letting our prayers, our meditations, our study of Holy Scripture and theology, be crowded out. So there steals upon us a torpor and deadness of soul resulting in a ministry of mere routine, without spiritual power. Then comes a further danger : old temptations, old sins, may revive, or new ones beset us, and we have neither strength nor courage to resist. Thus our life may become not merely one of dead routine but of positive sin. ' They made me keeper of the vineyards ; but mine own vineyard have I not kept ' (*Cant.* i. 6).

A retreat is what we need. In retreat we come face to face with God. Alone with Him we meditate again upon our end, and the means to attain to it. We purify our souls by penitence and confession. We hear once more the call of God sounding in our hearts. We see what He would have us do. Old ideals come back, and awaken fresh hope and desire. We pray and wait upon God, and He renews in us what has become decayed or corrupt. So we come from a well-made retreat with strength restored, love

rekindled, and a firm purpose to guard against the dangers we have seen, and to persevere more steadfastly in the cultivation of our inward life, while we give ourselves with fresh zeal to the work of our ministry.

2. *Particular.* Besides this general need we may have a more particular need, because of some special circumstance or crisis in our life.

Some change in our sphere of work which it may be advisable to make, and we want to know God's will about it.

A call to some higher and more responsible post in the Church, and we need to prepare ourselves for it.

Some special difficulty or temptation we have to meet.

A call to take some definite step onward in spiritual life which will cost real effort and perseverance.

The consideration of a possible call to mission work abroad, or to the Religious life.

In all such cases a retreat will be a great help, bringing light to know God's will, and grace and courage to do it.

II. Requisites for a Good Retreat

1. *Silence.* (1) Exterior, of the lips ; (2) interior, putting away all thoughts and imaginations which do not belong to the retreat ; and listening in silence for the voice of God speaking in your heart and conscience.

2. *Custody of the senses*, especially the eyes and ears. Distractions enter so easily by these.

3. *The exercise of your own faculties and powers* in meditation and prayer. In retreat we come to make the *Spiritual Exercises*, and that word *Exercises* implies that the retreatant is to be an exercitant. He is to exert himself, to use his own mental and spiritual powers, strengthened and illuminated, of course, by the Holy Spirit, whose help he must constantly invoke. He must seriously reflect upon the points and apply them to himself. How does this truth concern me and my life ? What have I done regarding it hitherto ? What ought I to do now ? What means must I employ ? What motives urge me to use these means ?

If any one point of the meditation helps and moves you,

dwell on it till you have thoroughly exhausted it and drawn from it all its fruit. Allow your soul to remain under the impression of the truth till it is prostrate in repentance, or established in indifference, or resigned to sacrifice, or warmed with generous love and resolution. For, as S. Ignatius says, ' It is not abundance of knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but the interior sense and taste of the things ' (Annot. ii).

4. *Reading.* Besides the Bible and the *Imitation of Christ,* which should always be at hand, choose some one book to be your companion during the retreat, a spiritual book on the priestly life or on prayer, or a suitable biography. Do not read anything which is not in harmony with the spirit of retreat, nor be looking into a variety of books you may see upon the shelves in the library. That is often a source of much distraction and may easily spoil your retreat.

5. *Self-examination.* S. Ignatius gives us two methods, (1) general, (2) particular. The general examination is made ' in order to purify oneself and to confess better.' A retreat confession ought to be something more than our ordinary confessions. It should go deeper down to the roots of things, and should be made with special care as to contrition and purpose of amendment. Generally it is best that it should cover the period since our last retreat.

The particular examination is for rooting out some one sin or defect, or it may be used to aid in the acquisition of some virtue, e.g. recollection, patience, humility, charity. During retreat S. Ignatius would have us direct it to the careful observance of the rules and exercises of the retreat.[1]

6. Lastly, we must enter upon a retreat with *a generous and courageous spirit,* ready to give God whatever He may ask of us. S. Ignatius says, ' It will greatly benefit him who receives the Exercises to enter upon them with a courageous heart and with liberality towards his Creator and Lord, offering Him all his will and liberty, in order that His divine Majesty may make use of his person and of all he possesses according to His most holy will ' (Annot. v). And the Directory enforces the same counsel : ' He who

[1] See Instruction II, p. 317.

comes to make the Exercises ought to endeavour to understand how great a matter it is which he is undertaking; a matter which not only concerns his soul, but concerns it in such a way that if only he is diligent in doing his part, he will lay foundations for his spiritual advancement, which will be found profitable in all his after life. From this he may understand what earnestness, diligence, and courage, he ought to bring to so great a work and enterprise. Therefore let him make up his mind to play the man, to put away all hindrances to divine grace, and to apply all the powers of his soul to co-operate with this grace, and to dispose himself as perfectly as he can to receive it' (Chap. ii. 1).

We must not enter upon a retreat merely as a matter of routine; nor may we set any limits beyond which we are unwilling to go in following the call of God. This generous disposition is most necessary for the success of a retreat. It includes two things, (1) desire and prayer to know the will of God: 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Show Thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto Thee'; and (2) readiness to obey the will of God when it is made known: 'Do with me what Thou wilt, for I know that Thou lovest me.' We should constantly, throughout the retreat, lift up our hearts with such prayers and aspirations as these, really desiring to know the will of God, and then to order our life accordingly for His glory and our own salvation.

Imitation of Christ, I. xx; III. liii.

GOD MY CREATOR AND MY END

'MAN was created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul' (*S. Ignatius*).

Prel. i. Place yourself in the presence of God our Lord and adore Him as your Creator.

Prel. ii. Pray that you may know with deep conviction the purpose of your creation, and may live accordingly.

I. GOD IS MY CREATOR

That is to say God called me out of nothingness. In body and in soul I come from Him : I am the work of His hands. From this it follows :

1. *Of myself I am nothing.* I am not my own. I have nothing of my own. I must convince myself of this truth. It is all important. It is the source of true humility, without which there can be no solid spiritual life and growth.

2. *Secondly, I am utterly and in all things dependent on God.* Moment by moment He upholds me in being. If He were to withdraw His hand, I should fall back into nothingness. I cannot draw one breath, or exercise one of the faculties of my soul or body, except in concurrence with the power which He supplies from moment to moment.

3. *This dependence will last for ever :* to-day, to-morrow, through all my life in this world, in the hour of my death—I shall die when God wills, I cannot prolong my life by a single hour—throughout eternity. I may rebel against this dependence now ; I shall be forced to submit hereafter. Always I shall be dependent upon God ; freely and gladly in heaven, or by compulsion in hell. I can never escape from the dominion of God.

In the light of these truths what must I think of the life I have led hitherto, or am leading now ? Have I not thought myself to be somewhat ? to have some claim to be independent, to live for myself, my own ends, my own will and pleasure ? How often I have forgotten that I belong to God

and am dependent upon Him, accountable to Him ! How often I have made self the centre of my life, and gone my own way without thought of God !

II. God has created me for Himself

Everything within me and around me bears witness to this truth.

1. *My reason.* It tells me that as God is an intelligent Being He must have had some purpose in creating me, and that purpose must be worthy of Himself. He could not create me for any end less than Himself, to know Him, love Him, serve Him here, and so to attain everlasting happiness with Him hereafter.

2. *My heart.* It craves for a perfection and a love which are infinite and eternal. Nothing but the infinite eternal Truth, Holiness, Beauty, Love, and Goodness of God can satisfy this desire which He has implanted in me. ' Thou has made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee ' (S. Aug., *Confessions*, I. 1).

3. *My experience.* When have I ever found true happiness and peace except when I have tried to love and serve God ? On the other hand, when I have gone astray in self-will and sin, what have I found but disquiet and remorse ? ' The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked ' (*Isa.* lvii. 20, 21).

4. *The creatures, all that is around me in the world.* They tell me by their imperfection, their inconstancy, their transitory character, that they are too poor, too weak, too uncertain, to satisfy me. ' The world passeth away, and the lust thereof : but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever ' (1 *S. John* ii. 17). ' Vanity of vanities ' (*Eccles.* i. 2) is written upon all earthly things. All is emptiness and nothingness, except to love God and to serve Him.

Therefore I am created for God. It was not necessary that He should create me, but since He has created me it is necessary that I should belong to Him, and serve Him truly all the days of my life.

III. My Service of God

1. *This service includes:* (1) the keeping of God's commandments; (2) the fulfilment of the duties of my state and calling in life; (3) the ordering of my life and all its details not according to my own fancy and liking, but according to the will of God made known to me in whatever way, through His providential government, or by legitimate authority, or by inward lights and inspirations of His Holy Spirit; (4) if I have not yet chosen a state of life, and am at liberty to make a choice, a serious deliberation as to what God wants me to do; (5) the effort, according to my calling and opportunities, to win others to the love and service of God.

2. *This service is always possible.* At times it may be difficult, and cost me much; but with the grace of God it is always in my power. There is nothing outside me which can really hinder me. For to serve God is to do His will, and where is the place, or the time, or what are the circumstances, in which I am not able to do His will? What peace, what security this should give me amid all the changes and chances of this mortal life! What confidence, if I try to do my best! God does not require my success in what I try to do in obedience to His will: all He requires is my faithful attempt to do the best I can. He does not measure my service by my success. If I have done what with His grace I could, that is the service He requires.

3. *And with this service He has bound up my salvation.* Consider what this is. Not merely to be saved from hell, but to be welcomed into the joy of my Lord, to be made perfect, capable of companionship with angels, and saints, and God Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. To enter into every kind of joy and happiness of which a perfect human nature is capable, and all this for ever, without possibility of loss or diminution.

What other object of life can I put in comparison with this? What else can have any value if I do not save my soul? 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul' (*S. Mark* viii. 36, 37).

And as the service of God is the necessary condition of my salvation, so it is also the one thing that can make me happy even here in this present life. Fallen man loves to be independent, to be his own master, to act according to his own will and impulses. Here is the source of all his misery. He seeks himself and is unhappy. He pursues his own ends and is restless and unsatisfied. He indulges his passions and becomes their slave (*S. John* viii. 34). On the other hand, to serve God is to enjoy freedom and peace. It is to win the victory over self and the world; to be superior to all creatures, and to have no other master but God, *Cui servire regnare est.*

Let me see to it, then, that I am bringing to the service of God my whole heart. Think of those words of our Lord, 'One thing is needful' (*S. Luke* x. 42). Surely I may apply them here. One thing above all else is needful: to serve God and by this means to save my soul. It is a personal matter for me. I myself, with the grace of God, must serve God and save my soul: no one else can do this for me.

My God, I am not my own, but Thine; take me for Thine own, and make me in all things to do Thy holy will. O my God, I give myself to Thee, for joy or for sorrow, for sickness or for health, for life or for death, for time and for eternity. Make me and keep me Thine own for ever; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Imitation of Christ, III. ix, x.

THE END AND RIGHT USE OF CREATURES

After speaking of the end of man S. Ignatius continues, 'And the other things on the face of the earth were created for man's sake, and in order to aid him in the attainment of the end for which he was created.'

Prel. i. Contemplate God in His controlling providence ordering all things with infinite wisdom and love for the good of each individual soul.

Prel. ii. Pray that you may use all creatures to the glory of God, and for the sanctification and salvation of your soul.

I. The End of Creatures

By creatures, i.e. 'the other things on the face of the earth,' S. Ignatius means not only creatures in the ordinary sense of the word, viz. the various objects of this visible world, but also all events, circumstances, states and conditions of life, all the arrangements of God's providence, all, whether in the natural or supernatural order, that causes us pleasure or pain, all in fact which is distinct from our own personality and God.

It is true, of course, that God made nothing evil or painful, but many things which were good in themselves have become evil and painful to us because of the disorder brought into our nature and into the world by sin. Still, even these things are said to be creatures of God because they have now entered into the new order of His providential government of this fallen world, and He uses them for His good purposes. They are for our trial and discipline. They help us to practise mortification, submission, patience, faith, and many other virtues.

All creatures, then, understanding the word in this wide sense, were created by God 'for man's sake,' to minister to his wants, his innocent pleasures, his education and development, and so to aid him in the prosecution of his end: the love and service of God, and the salvation of his soul.

There are three ways in which creatures may help us here :—

1. *The first is by contemplation,* rising by the consideration of earthly things and events to the contemplation of their invisible and eternal counterparts; and above all to the knowledge of the Creator and His attributes. 'The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead' (*Rom.* i. 20). This use of creatures is illustrated in the closing Exercise of the whole series, the 'Contemplation for obtaining Love.' How greatly such a use of creatures might conduce to heavenly-mindedness and joy! Keble's *Christian Year* abundantly illustrates this use of creatures, and the spiritual frame of mind which is its happy fruit.

2. *The second is in their use;* for the supply of our necessary wants, for the right exercise and development of our faculties bodily and mental, also for innocent enjoyment and recreation. Or, if they be things or circumstances which cause us pain, using them as an exercise of patience, fortitude, and submission to the will of God.

3. *The third is by abstinence, or privation;* abstaining from the use of pleasant things in the practice of temperance and mortification, or submitting to loss and deprivation with patience and resignation (cf. *Job* i. 21).

Of these three ways of using creatures, the first is the highest, the second the most common, the third, which in the state of innocence was so easy and applied to so few things, is now in our fallen state of extreme necessity and must be practised by us well-nigh continually. For unless we practise abstinence and mortification, even in things lawful, we shall certainly fail to use creatures with due moderation, and shall be entirely unable to rise from them to the contemplation of God.

Thus it is that creatures are intended by God to help us on our way. They were created for man, and not man for them. They are for his use and service, and to help him, whether by his use and enjoyment of them or his abstinence

from them, in the prosecution of the end for which he was created.

II. The Right Use of Creatures

Whatever God gives me must be used for His glory, i.e. with love to Him and in His service. The smallest things may be thus used as much as the greatest. This is true of all things, persons, circumstances, pleasures, pains, worldly goods, powers of body or mind, spiritual endowments, and gifts of grace. Everything is good if it be used in the love of God and for His service, for then it develops an interior union between the soul and God. Everything is evil if it be not so used, for then it becomes a principle of separation between the soul and God. Objects of outward delight must never absorb the soul, for then our delight in God's creatures would draw us away from Him. Things from which the outward nature shrinks will often give the simpler, purer joy to the soul which loves God ; for they draw it to contemplate God more simply in Himself.

If, however, we are to be able to use creatures in this which is the only right way, we must be detached from them in heart and will. This is what S. Ignatius means when he says that we must ' make ourselves indifferent to all created things ; so that we do not for our part wish for health more than sickness, for wealth more than poverty, for honour more than low-estate, for a long life more than for a short one, and so in all other things, desiring and choosing only that which leads us more directly to the end for which we were created.' [1]

These four classes of creatures and their opposites seem to be mentioned by S. Ignatius, because they include so many of the objects to which we are wont to be unduly attached, or from which we naturally shrink. But they are only samples selected out of many others, for the saint completes the enumeration with an all-inclusive phrase,

[1] This generous disposition and ardent desire for perfection will meet us again, with ever increasing emphasis, in the meditations on the Kingdom of Christ, the Two Standards, and the Three Classes, till it reaches its full development in the Third Mode of Humility (Meditation xx, p. 79). Thus at the outset S. Ignatius lays the foundation for the most perfect dispositions and the loftiest heights of perfection to which the Exercises are designed to lead us.

' and so in all other things.' Among these ' other things ' we may reckon talents and gifts which God gives to some and withholds from others ; position and influence in the Church, or a lowly and hidden sphere of work ; dwelling place, the persons with whom we have to live, their character and conduct towards us ; all events and circumstances happy or unhappy ; supernatural gifts also, consolation or desolation—in a word all that belongs to the environment and setting of our lives. With regard to all these we must make ourselves indifferent, so as to be able freely to follow the will of God, to act or to suffer, seeking in all things not ourselves, but His glory and love, and eternal happiness with Him hereafter in heaven.

This is the true way of peace, liberty, contentment, and happiness. If we have this indifference or detachment it will set us free from all restlessness. We shall be content wherever God places us and with whatever He gives us. We shall rest in His providential guidance of ourselves and of the world, and stay ourselves upon the truth that ' all things work together for good to them that love God ' (*Rom.* viii. 28).

Imitation of Christ, III. xv, xvi, xxxi, xxxviii.

THE END OF A PRIEST

We have considered the end for which man was created. Now let us consider more particularly the end of our vocation as priests.

The end of a priest is in a more perfect manner than others to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and so doing to attain to salvation in a higher degree of perfection.

Prel. i. *S. John* xv. 16 : 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.'

Prel. ii. Pray for light to understand more deeply the dignity and privilege of your vocation, and for grace to follow it more faithfully.

I. The Fact of my Vocation

'*Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.*' My vocation, then, does not rest on my own weak and vacillating will, but on God's choice. This of course does not annul my moral liberty and responsibility. I must respond to the call and be faithful to it. But the call itself is of Divine grace, and therefore essentially sure.

What strength and comfort this fact should bring me if ever I am tempted to doubt the reality of my vocation, or to be unfaithful to it ! My God, it was not I who chose this life and work, but Thou in love hast chosen me for it ! Even if there should have been some mistake or unworthy motive in my ordination, I must not add to that the sin of unfaithfulness. I cannot now go back, and be as if I had not been ordained. Rather let me repent of any fault there may have been, and then give myself to God, sure that He will meet me with His blessing, and not be wanting to His own ordinance.

But my surrender must be whole-hearted. Our Lord cannot work with mere machines or slaves, but only with those who are His friends. 'Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you,' if, that is, our will be wholly given to Him. And this, too, is the only way of peace and happiness. A half-hearted priest must always be unhappy ;

he can neither escape from his obligations, nor can he rejoice in free companionship with his Master.

II. The End for which God has Chosen Me

'I have chosen you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit.'

God has not chosen me that I should be occupied with temporal things, or to lead a soft and easy life: 'The Lord Himself is the portion of my inheritance' (*Ps.* xvi. 6); nor to be honoured among men: 'Marvel not, if the world hate you' (1 *S. John* iii. 13; cf. *S. John* xv. 18).

God has chosen me that I 'should go'—go forth and preach the Gospel to all the world; the Gospel of the kingdom of heaven, repentance, amendment of life, the Cross, the service of Christ which is perfect freedom, the crown laid up in heaven.

'Go,' providing 'neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses' (*S. Matt.* x. 9). Go in the spirit of poverty and dependence upon God, free from all covetousness and worldly anxiety, in the power of the Spirit, clad in 'the whole armour of God' (*Eph.* vi. 11); for the 'weapons of our warfare are not carnal' (2 *Cor.* x. 4) but spiritual.

God has chosen me that I should 'bring forth fruit,' not, as the barren fig tree, leaves only (*S. Matt.* xxi. 19).

The fruit which as priests we must bring forth, consists in this, that we labour in the work of our own sanctification, and for the salvation and sanctification of others.

As priests we are consecrated to God, to offer the Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, in Holy Mass and in the Divine Office. How do I perform this work?

As priests we are to be judges of consciences, fathers and physicians of souls. Am I fitting myself by prayer, study, and holy discipline, for this difficult, yet blessed, work?

The priest is called by God to be a pastor and teacher, to seek for Christ's lost sheep, to feed them with food convenient for them, to teach them the whole counsel of God. Do I visit in my parish? pray for those committed to my charge? instruct them with all care and diligence?

The priest is to be an example to his flock, in himself, in his home, in his parish; 'in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity' (1 *Tim.* iv. 12).

Great indeed is the vocation of the priest, great his responsibility, and great will be his ruin if he sins, or neglects his work, or does it carelessly, or in a worldly and self-seeking spirit.

III. The Obligation to Sanctity

The priest is bound by his vocation to strive after perfection. He does not fulfil this obligation merely by living an ordinarily good life, in the practice of those virtues which should be found in every Christian. Something more than this is required of him, a more entire oblation and consecration of himself to God and His service.

The Fathers, when speaking of the priesthood, require a certain interior spiritual perfection even in those who are as yet but candidates for Holy Orders. Thus S. Gregory Nazianzen says : ' I then, knowing these things, and that no one is worthy of the great God and of the Sacrifice, and of the High Priest, who has not first offered himself to God a living and holy sacrifice . . . how should I (without these things) dare to put on the name and habit of a priest before (my) hands be consecrated by holy works, and my eyes accustomed healthily to behold the creation and to worship the Creator alone ; . . . before my feet be planted upon the rock, . . . and all my ways be directed according to God, . . . before every member has become a weapon of righteousness, all dead works being cast off, swallowed up of life, and giving place to the Spirit ? ' (*Orat.* II, *c.* xcv). This is, in outline, the spiritual perfection S. Gregory requires even in ordinands. How much more, then, in priests !

But besides seeking his own perfection, the priest has, both by word and example, to teach others the way of holiness. Think of this in connection with our Lord's words, ' Ye are the salt of the earth ' (*S. Matt.* v. 13). Salt signifies here ' the personal possession of the sanctity which resists corruption, and is able to communicate the same resisting power by contact and influence.' But for this purpose the priest must be in some way separate from the world. Men must feel that he diffuses not the savour of the world, but the ' savour of Christ ' (2 *Cor.* ii. 15). The salt that has lost its savour is the priest who lives on the level of mere natural goodness, blameless, or even estimable, in

the eyes of the world, but not rising to supernatural sanctity. Such a life cannot be a 'savour of Christ' or 'of life' to others.

So let me ask myself about my relations with the world. Do I impart the savour of Christ to the world, or does the world impart its savour to me? As salt preserves food from corruption and seasons it, so the priest ought to purify the world in which he moves, preserving it from corruption and imparting to it the 'sweet savour of Christ.' Let us be very much on our guard against losing this savour; for if we lose it, with what salt shall we be salted, to whom has been committed the salting of the world?

S. Paul says to every one of us, 'Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy progress may be manifest unto all. Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee' (1 *Tim.* iv. 14–16).

In these words S. Paul sets forth the twofold exercise of perfection, personal and pastoral, to which the priest is bound, first in his own inner life, and then, beyond that, in his ministry to others.

Truly our office is a great and difficult one in both these aspects, and calls for great holiness of life. 'A priest,' says à Kempis, 'ought to be adorned with all virtues, and to set an example of good life to others. His life and conversation should not be in the common ways of men, but with the angels in heaven, or with the perfect on earth' (IV. v. 2).

Imitation of Christ, III. x; IV. v.

THE TRIPLE SIN

PREL. i. Think of the rebel angels cast out of heaven, and then of Adam and Eve driven forth from Eden and the presence of God, in each case for a single sin.

Prel. ii. Pray 'for shame and confusion of face,' seeing how you have deserved to be condemned eternally for your many sins.

We must not allow ourselves to think that we have no need of the meditations belonging to the purgative way, because our sins have not been very great and are, we trust, forgiven. We need to cherish an abiding sorrow for past sins, whether great or small. The lack of this sorrow is often a cause of failure to make progress in spiritual life and holiness. If, through the mercy of God, we have been preserved from mortal sins, we can think of our many venial sins, our propensity to sin, our lack of love, and the unprofitableness of our service of God. This may well fill us with 'shame and confusion of face.'

I. THE SIN OF THE ANGELS

The angels were created by God that they might worship and serve Him, and in that worship and service find an eternity of joy.

For the attainment of this end God endowed them with the most glorious gifts of nature and of grace. But a number of them were untrue to their end. They 'abode not in the truth' (*S. John* viii. 44; *S. Jude* 6): they were not willing to use their liberty to worship and serve their Creator. They made themselves their end, choosing to be independent and to use their great gifts for their own glory. Thus they sinned by pride and rebellion, and in that moment they fell from grace and were cast down from heaven.

Let me consider this well, and apply its lessons to myself.

How little have I thought of the end for which God created me, and been true to it; and in consequence how much of my life has been spent in sin, or at least has failed of its true purpose and of any title to reward!

Not only have I forgotten my end for long periods, but again and again, not once only as the angels, I have rebelled against it and made myself my own end, carried away by pride, or passion, or self-will; and this after so many benefits heaped upon me by God, my Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

Let me meditate upon this in detail and with practical applications, in order thereby to move my affections and my will.

Let me consider with wonder and fear that God, who in His infinite justice and holiness punished so terribly and immediately the one sin of the angels, still sustains me in being, and bears with me after my many sins.

I will humble myself with shame and confusion of face because I have so often and so grievously offended Him.

I will pray for pardon, and for grace to make a really contrite confession, resolving to take vengeance upon my sins, and to amend my life for the future.

II. The Sin of our First Parents

They too, like the angels, were created to know, love, and serve God, and by so doing to attain eternal life and happiness with Him in heaven. They were good, innocent, and happy in the garden where God placed them, but not yet perfect, though capable of attaining perfection by obedience to God. If they had been true to Him He would have guided their development—mental, moral, and spiritual—in a safe and right way.

But they turned away from their duty to God to seek satisfaction in creatures rather than in Him, who was the true end of their being. Eve tempted by the devil tempted Adam. They had the power, if they had willed to exercise it, of refusing Satan's temptation; but they listened to him and chose to consent to him. Thus the development of the race of man in knowledge and in the growth of his powers, which might have been without sin, was in fact accompanied by a moral and spiritual fall.

The consequences of their sin.

(*a*) Shame and fear: they tried to hide themselves from God (*Gen.* iii. 7, 8).

(*b*) Death. Their souls died at once, for they lost the grace of God which is the life of the soul. Their bodies also came under the sentence of decay and death. They were excluded from paradise. The ground was cursed for their sake. Though God gave them the grace of penitence and pardon, yet they must linger on through a long life of penance in toil and sorrow (*Gen.* iii. 17–19).

(*c*) The whole human race was involved in the consequences of their sin (*Rom.* v. 12). All are born with a tendency to sin, and without that spiritual life of grace which Adam's sin had forfeited.

Meditate upon this, and learn—

(*a*) Not to judge of sin by its apparent littleness. Sin in a nature indwelt and helped by the Spirit of God, as was Adam's, however immature in natural development, could not but involve a terrible loss. How much more terrible must its results be in a Christian, and above all in a priest. Therefore never let me think, This sin is so small, no serious harm will come of it. If I know it to be a sin, that is enough : I dare not do it.

(*b*) If Adam's sin had such far-reaching consequences, how can I tell where the results of any sin of mine may end ? Some sins may bear deadly fruit in the ruin of other souls long after I am gone to my account.

(*c*) Lastly, let me compare my sins with the sin of Adam and Eve. On their side, a single sin committed before they had any experience of sin's deadly fruit. On my part, so many sins—sins committed in a body and soul redeemed by Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit—sins committed in the light of the Cross, and our Lord's warnings about hell—sins for which I have had so little penitence, which perhaps I have never really repented of at all.

III. The Sin of some Priest among the Lost

Consider how many priests there are who once seemed to have made great progress in virtue and to be doing much for God, and then have lost their first love and becoming lukewarm and careless have fallen into grave sin. Little by little they gave way to sins which at first did not look

serious, and might easily have been checked and rooted out, till at last their whole life has become hollow and unreal. Means of grace have been misused or used in vain, because they would not rouse themselves to break off bad habits. Neglect of prayer, worldliness, ambition, discontent, pride, sloth, sensuality, have sapped their spiritual life till they have lost the spirit of their vocation, and have ended, some by abandoning it, others by yielding to strong temptation to mortal sin, and in their sin have died without repentance, and are now in hell.

Meditating upon this and looking into my own heart :—

1. I will fear lest if I continue to be so negligent in dealing with inordinate affections, which have so often led me into sin and chilled my love and fervour, God should withdraw grace which I do not use, and I should fall away and be lost.

2. I will humble myself with great shame and confusion of face for my many sins and culpable negligences, and will, with God's help, seriously purpose amendment for the future.

3. I will thank God that in spite of my negligence and misuse of grace, He still preserves me in life and gives me time for true repentance and amendment.

4. Contemplating Christ, our Lord, upon the Cross, bearing my sins, I will think with adoring wonder how He came down from heaven, leaving the glory which He had with the Father, to redeem me at so great a cost ; and I will ask myself those piercing questions which S. Ignatius suggests at the close of this meditation : ' What have I done for Christ ; what am I doing for Him ; what ought I to do for Him ? ' And as my heart makes answer, I will resolve and purpose for the future.

Imitation of Christ, III. iv, viii, lii.

MY OWN SINS

PREL. i. Myself as a criminal about to appear before my Judge.

Prel. ii. Pray for true and deep contrition for your sins.

I. A REVIEW OF THE SINS OF MY WHOLE LIFE

Not in detail as if preparing for confession (this should be done afterwards apart from the meditation), but in a general way in order to increase shame and contrition.

To help myself to make this review I will divide my life into periods, childhood, school days, etc., according to any marked divisions in it. I will think too of the various places in which I have lived, the companions with whom I have been associated, the occupations in which I have been engaged.

1. *In childhood.* What do my earliest memories reveal of my thoughts when alone, my words, my actions?

2. *In youth.* I will recall the sins committed in the various places where I have lived, home, school, college; by day or by night; alone or with others; the books I used to read; my secret thoughts; my prayers or my neglect of them; my confirmation; my communions; my whole attitude towards God and religion.

3. *In later life,* especially since my ordination. I will confess my failure to correspond with all the graces God has given me. I will think not only of the sins I can single out and name, but of the whole character and tone of my life; how far it is falling short of the inward light God gives me in prayer and in my retreats, or of what I teach and urge upon others from the pulpit, or in the confessional, or in my correspondence.

As I look back over my life where do I not find memories of sin—multitudes, multitudes, more in number than the hairs of my head? If I think of God's commandments, which of them have I not broken? If I examine my bodily senses and powers, with which of them have I not sinned—sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, my hands, my feet, my tongue? Or the powers of my soul, memory, understanding, imagination, affections, will?

If I have committed but one mortal sin I have deserved hell. It is of God's mercy that I am not already lost. What, then, ought I to think of my many sins, grave sins so often repeated that they have become habits and have enslaved me for years; sins for which I have had, and perhaps still have, so little contrition; sins against light and manifold graces and repeated warnings of conscience; sins which have defiled my body and my soul; sins committed by one who has been made a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 *Cor.* iii. 16, 17; vi. 15), called also to the priesthood?

II. The Foulness, Ingratitude, and Folly of my Sins

1. *Their foulness.* What a hideous sight! A moral leprosy, more horrible than any disease of the body! Let me think of my soul in its first baptismal purity, and now so defiled with sins of every kind: of my body so degraded by sensual indulgence.

2. *Their ingratitude.* I owe everything to God, all that I am and have: the faculties of my soul and body, the creatures He has given me for my sustenance and my use, and I have used them so often to sin against Him. He created me, and moment by moment He upholds me in being. If He were to withdraw His sustaining power, I should fall back into the nothingness from whence I came. If He took away my reason, I should become more helpless than the brutes. If He deprived me of sight, or hearing, or speech, or the power of movement, how could I wonder, seeing how I have used all these gifts to sin against Him times out of number!

How great has been my ingratitude! I owe all I am and have to God, yet I have turned my back upon Him, and said to Him, 'Depart from me; leave me to myself, to go my own way, to seek my own gratification, to indulge my passions freely without constraint, without the thought of Thee, who for my sins didst bear the shame and suffering of the Cross.' My sins: Thy Cross! Thy many gifts: my manifold misuse of them! Thy forbearance: my obstinate continuance in sin!

I have despised and rejected Thy love, presumed upon Thy forbearance. I have given scandal and been the cause

of sin in others, perhaps been directly their tempter, doing the work of the devil himself.

3. *Their folly.* I have forsaken Thee, my Father, my Saviour, my chief good—and for what? For some paltry worthless object; for the gratification of some vile passion of which I am ashamed; for a pleasure which passes in a moment, leaving only guilt and remorse behind.

O my God, if I had treated a fellow man as I have treated Thee, should I not be overwhelmed with shame? How could I forgive myself? And yet, when it is Thou, the Supreme Good, my God and Saviour, against whom I have sinned, I have but little sorrow, or none at all. Even if I have at times made some sort of repentance and confession, how often it has been formal, heartless, without contrition and without amendment.

III. The God against whom I have Sinned

I will measure the greatness of my sins by thinking of the greatness of God against whom I have sinned.

1. *His love.* He created me out of love, that I might share His life, His love, His joy. This love I have spurned whenever I have sinned wilfully and knowingly.

2. *His wisdom.* All His commandments are established in wisdom for our good, to keep us in the right way and lead us to our true end. When I have sinned I have preferred my own ignorance to His infinite wisdom.

3. *His holiness.* By sin I have dishonoured His image in which I am created, and degraded myself below the level of the beasts that perish. They obey the instincts which God has given them for a law; but I sin against the very law of my nature, the divine image in which I was created.

4. *His power.* Every moment He upholds me in being, even while I sin against Him with the very powers and faculties of my body and soul which are His gift to me.

5. *His omniscience.* Nothing is hid from Him. He knows me within and without, and reads the most secret thoughts of my heart (*Ps.* cxxxix. 1–4; *Heb.* xii. 12, 13).

6. *His omnipresence.* If men were present to witness my sin, their presence would restrain me. Yet though I know that God is everywhere present, the thought of His presence does not stop me (*Prov.* xv. 3).

7. *His patience.* If God left no interval between my sin and its punishment, should I dare to commit the sin? But because He is patient, I abuse His long-suffering (*Rom.* ii. 4).

IV. What am I who have thus dared to Sin?

What am I in comparison with the angels who fell? Yet if God spared not them, let me take heed lest He spare not me, so far below them in my feeble nature.

1. *My body.* How poor and frail a thing, formed out of the dust of the earth, and soon to return to dust again! How quickly its strength and beauty pass away! What will it be a few days after death but a mass of corruption!

2. *My soul.* What have I made of it by my sins? If I could see it as God sees it, I should know that it is more loathsome than a corpse. The corruption of my body in death is only a faint image of the corruption of my soul through sin.

3. *My whole life.* What is it but a little breath which will quickly pass away! 'Behold, Thou hast made my days as it were a span long; and mine age is even as nothing in respect of Thee; and verily every man living is altogether vanity' (*Ps.* xxxix. 6).

What, then, am I that I should dare to assert myself, to take my own way and to sin against God? How greatly must my sin be aggravated by my littleness and vileness, compared with the greatness, the love, the wisdom, the holiness, the power, of God against whom I sin!

Let me try to bring all this home to myself. The more I know of my own misery and of God's goodness, the better shall I be disposed for that shame and contrition which are to be the fruit of this meditation.

O my God, I thank Thee that Thou hast spared me hitherto, and given me the desire and the time for repentance. Give me such true inward sorrow for my sins as shall bear fruit in real amendment of life. Henceforth I desire to devote myself wholly to Thee and to Thy service. 'The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise' (*Ps.* li. 17).

LUKEWARMNESS

PREL. i. Our Lord saying to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, 'I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth' (*Rev.* iii. 15, 16).

Prel. ii. Pray that you may always be a fervent priest.

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF LUKEWARMNESS

Lukewarmness is a danger to which all are exposed, but especially priests. It is a most subtle and many-sided evil. Consider well with thyself the following signs of it:

To meditate and pray without heart or fruit.

To shrink from recollection: rarely to enter into oneself.

To examine oneself carelessly, and without purpose of amendment.

To speak freely of the faults of others: never to think of or acknowledge one's own.

To have no fear of little sins, no sorrow for them; to make no efforts to overcome them.

To seek solace from outward things, because of the distaste we feel for the inward life.

Self-pity, discontent, complaining, listlessness, and gloom.

Careless use of Sacraments: no hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Facility in omitting spiritual duties, easily dispensing oneself, or discharging them perfunctorily.

Preaching, teaching, visiting, hearing confessions, as a matter of routine, without preparation, and without hope and desire to convert and edify souls.

All life like a sauntering walk in a valley; no uphill work and determination, no real effort to get near to God. No strong passions, it may be, no flagrant sins; but a life of soft ease, listless hours, late rising, unrestricted indulgence in light reading and other recreations, unstinted meals, free mixing in society.

Where in all this is self-denial and the Cross? Where the likeness of Jesus stamped upon the soul? Where the battle with the flesh and with the world?

For the world helps to make the priest lukewarm. The world likes a certain amount of religion in a priest, but not too much. There must be no forward zeal to break in upon its quiet slumber. The world would have the clergy contented with a low aim; it discourages efforts after sanctity and true devotion.

II. The Danger of such a State, and our Lord's Hatred of it

1. *It does continual despite to grace.* The lukewarm soul is always refusing or neglecting the promptings of grace. Each refusal or neglect dulls the conscience, weakens the will, confirms listlessness.

The soul which will not obey grace cannot retain it, and will assuredly go downhill. The movement may be slow, but there is no stay. Not to advance is to go back. Where, then, shall we end?

Our neglect of grace causes God to withdraw it. Then the soul becomes torpid, like one drugged or asleep. Then, perhaps, a strong temptation to grave sin, and the soul has not strength to resist. Those who look on may know nothing of its real condition till the fall comes. 'Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead' (*Rev.* iii. 1).

2. *Our Lord's hatred of such a state.* 'I would thou wert cold or hot.' 'Because thou art lukewarm, I will spue thee out of My mouth.' Startling words! The lukewarm soul may be in a worse plight than the downright sinner. There is less hope of conversion. The amount of unreal religion it has prevents it seeing what true religion requires; just as in medical practice inoculation with the milder form of a disease exhausts the power of taking the more malignant form.

3. *It is so dishonouring to God.* Never to have known God nor tasted His sweetness is one thing; but to have once been fervent, to have tasted His goodness, and then to draw back and become lukewarm—that is what so dishonours and grieves Him. What wonder that our Lord should use such startling language, as if it were better even to be cold than lukewarm!

III. Safeguards and Remedies

1. *Realize that this is no far-away or imaginary danger.* Our familiarity with holy things puts us in special danger. It is so easy to slip into perfunctory ways; to forget the holiness and majesty of God, and lose our sense of mystery and awe; to use without really using the means of grace. So easy to get weary of living by rule and to dispense ourselves on the slightest pretexts; to get into desultory ways, to waste time, to put off and then neglect duties; to lose our first love and all the care and strictness we once had. To realize these dangers is a great safeguard against them.

2. *Often call to mind those who have lived fervently in the priesthood*, those we have known or read of. To read the lives of holy priests keeps an ideal before us, stimulates hope, and the desire to imitate them.

3. *Self-examination, general and particular.* What is my ruling passion—pride, sensuality, anger, sloth? Deal with it practically. 'I will follow upon mine enemies, and overtake them; neither will I turn again till I have destroyed them' (*Ps.* xviii. 37).

4. *Sometimes a good general confession*, repairing the defects of past ones made without real contrition or purpose of amendment.

5. *Order in our life.* The lack of this is a frequent cause of procrastination or neglect of duties; then of hurry, confusion, dissipation, and so of lukewarmness.

6. *Perseverance in prayer in spite of dryness and difficulties.* Prayer is not to be valued because of the consolations it may bring us, but because it belongs to our true end, the worship and service of God. Nor is fervour a matter of feeling, but of will.

7. *Mortification, not only interior but exterior.* This, says Faber, is nearer a specific than anything else. Make the flesh suffer.

Do not let it make us hopeless if God shows us that lukewarmness has in any degree crept over us. Faber says again, 'It is a great grace, a prophecy of a miraculous

recovery, to find out that we are lukewarm'; but he adds, 'We are lost if we do not act with vigour the moment we make the frightening discovery. It is like going to sleep in the snow, almost a pleasant tingling feeling at first, and then—the sleep of death.'

God shows us our condition that He may bring us out of it. The fact that we can see and feel it shows that we are capable of recovery; we are not yet dead. The dead feel nothing. But we must rouse ourselves at once and act with vigour.

Remember our Lord's words to the angel of the church in Ephesus (*Rev.* ii. 5), 'Repent, and do the first works'—not 'feel the first feelings.' That is not *directly* in our power. The good feelings will come when God wills, and sees them to be good for us. Meanwhile 'Do the first works.' Take up again the old rule of life, and discipline, and prayer. If you suffer from dryness, take it as a penance, and persevere with hope and courage. God will not fail you, if you seek Him with all your heart. He desires your sanctification (1 *Thess.* iv. 3). That is the end for which He created you, and has called you to His service in the sacred ministry of holy Church.

Imitation of Christ, I. xi, xviii, xxv.

HELL

In the preceding meditations I have been led on, through a deep sense of shame and confusion of face for my sins, to the sorrow of contrition—the sorrow which springs from love and gratitude to God, who has not cut me off in my sins, but has showed such pity and mercy towards me, sparing me till now, and giving me time and grace for repentance. I feel love and gratitude now, but what if, becoming careless and lukewarm, I should forget what I owe to God and fall back again into mortal sin?

It is to guard against this danger that S. Ignatius would have me meditate upon hell.[1]

Prel. i. Looking up to Jesus on the Cross, and beholding there the proof of His boundless love and pity, I will dare to meditate upon what He tells me of the reality and pains of hell.

Prel. ii. I will pray that if ever, through carelessness and indulgence in lesser sins, I should forget the love I owe to God, at least the fear of hell may keep me from mortal sin.

I. The Reality of Hell

The clearest teaching about hell in the Bible comes from the lips of Jesus Christ our loving Saviour. In love He warns us of 'everlasting punishment,' of 'the worm that dieth not' and 'the fire that never shall be quenched,' of the 'outer darkness,' the eternal separation from God, the 'weeping and gnashing of teeth,' and bids us cut off the right hand or pluck out the right eye, rather than let them bring us into that 'place of torment' (*S. Mark* ix. 43–48; *S. Matt.* viii. 12; xviii. 8, 9; xxv. 41).

And the Church has ever borne witness to this awful truth, that there is a hell, and that those who die in unrepented mortal sin go there; that they suffer the pain of the loss of God, and the pain of unquenchable fire, whatever

[1] God wills all men to be saved (1 *Tim.* ii. 4), but He cannot save us in spite of ourselves. No one will be lost except he refuses to accept the salvation offered in Christ. If hell is eternal, it is because there is such a thing as 'eternal sin,' i.e. eternal rebellion of the will against God (*S. Mark* iii. 29, R.V.).

the nature of that fire may be ; and all this for ever and ever.

Many a soul would never have been saved but for this merciful revelation of hell ; and S. Ignatius tells me that I need to meditate upon it ' in order that if, through my faults,' i.e. lesser sins condoned and allowed, ' I should forget the love of the eternal Lord, at least the fear of punishment may help me not to fall into sin,' i.e. mortal sin, and lose my soul.

II. The Punishments of Hell

' Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire ' (*S. Matt.* xxv. 41). These words reveal a twofold punishment.

1. ' Depart from Me.' Here is the *poena damni*, the pain of loss, the most intolerable of the pains of hell. The lost are for ever shut out from God, for whom the soul was made, from the Beatific Vision, from the love and glory and bliss of heaven.

Think what this world would be without God to reign over it, to order it, to watch over us and help us by His providence. What a place of anarchy and confusion it would become ! Such is hell, a place of anarchy and confusion. There is neither peace nor order there. The soul cannot appeal to God there. In vain it looks for Him. Darkness encloses it. It cannot pray to God, for it has neither hope nor love. It can only hate Him and blaspheme Him.

And the soul deprived of God is mocked by evil spirits. ' Where is now thy God ? ' (*Ps.* xlii. 3). It has none to take its part ; none to have pity on it. Once it had a Saviour, a Mediator, by whom it could come to God. Now that help is gone. Hope is shut out. It has lost God for ever.

And losing God, it has lost all that is good. All the sweet things of earth, love of home, of friends, of nature—all these are shadows of God and contain something of Him ; and all these are gone now, lost for ever. All is darkness, loneliness, despair. Blessed Mary and the saints pray for the lost soul no more. The prayers of the Church can help it no more. The sentence of the Judge has gone forth, ' Depart from Me.'

2. There is also the *poena sensus*, the pain of sense, 'the fire that never shall be quenched' (*S. Mark* ix. 43; *S. Matt.* xviii. 8; xxv. 41; *Rev.* xx. 15; xxi. 8). We do not know the nature of this fire. Our Lord may be speaking the language of imagery, as indeed all language about the unseen world must be imagery. But this does not mitigate its terror. Such imagery used by our loving Saviour must represent a fearful reality.

III. 'Their Worm Dieth Not'

Consider the remorse that will torment the souls of the lost.

1. *Torment of the conscience.* In hell the soul sees that it has had its opportunity, that it could have conquered, that God gave sufficient grace, and that it is its own fault that it is now in hell.

This is the undying worm of remorse which will for ever torment the soul of the lost priest. 'I might so easily have been saved. It was God's will to save me. But I would not let Him. Oh, if only I had made a good confession in my last retreat, when conscience urged me to repentance, and the love of God knocked at the door of my heart! But now it is too late. I am separated from God, and from all good, for ever.' Oh, the despair of that thought! This is indeed the worm that never dies.

2. *Torment of the memory.* The soul will remember all the helps and means of salvation God gave it: baptism, confirmation, confessions, communions, sermons, retreats, the good examples of others, inward calls of grace. God stood at the door and knocked, but the soul would not open. Oh, what would not the soul give now to have those opportunities again!

3. *Torment of the understanding.* The soul will behold the indelible marks of baptism, confirmation, ordination, and realize how these only increase its misery and shame. It will know at last the greatness of the dignity to which it was raised, and the depth of the ruin to which it has fallen.

4. *Torment of the imagination.* The soul will picture to

itself all the pleasures of its past life in contrast with its present lack of every kind of solace. It will see spread out before it the endless vista of eternity, in which there shall never be any relief. 'What,' says S. Bernard, 'is more intolerable than ever to long for that which will never be, and ever to rebel against that which will always be.'

Terrible indeed will be the anguish of the lost soul in hell; terrible the torment of the thought from which it cannot turn away: 'I might have been saved . . . God's will was my sanctification. For this He created me, called me, gave me so many helps, and heaped upon me so many graces; and now, by my own fault, I have lost all, and come into this place of torment for ever.'

As you think of all this, thank God that you are still in His Church with the means of grace and the hope of heaven. Resolve to give yourself to His service out of gratitude and love. Yet keep the fear of hell in the background of your mind as an emergency motive, which may keep you from sin, if unhappily love should grow cold, and you should be tempted to risk your soul for the short-lived gratification of some forbidden pleasure.

Think, good Jesu, my salvation
Caused Thy wondrous Incarnation,
Leave me not to reprobation.

Faint and weary Thou hast sought me,
On the Cross of suffering bought me,
Shall such grace be vainly brought me?

Righteous Judge! for sin's pollution
Grant Thy gift of absolution,
'Ere that day of retribution.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxiv; III. xiv.

DEATH

PREL. i. Go in thought into some cemetery. Contemplate the silent graves; and then let your thoughts travel on to the unseen world where the spirits of the dead await the judgement day.

Prel. ii. Pray that you may have a deep sense of the seriousness of life and the solemnity of death.

I. THE DECEPTIVENESS OF THIS WORLD

Our earthly life is full of deception. Things are not what they seem. All that appeals to the natural mind and heart is but the appearance of things, not the reality.

Therefore at Baptism we promised to renounce the pomps and vanity, i.e. the empty show, the unreal glory and attractiveness, of the world.

It is not that the world of outward things is evil in itself, but it has become a danger and a deception to us because we have fallen from our true position, so that we see things amiss, and put a false value on them. And Satan, the god of this world, blinds our eyes by means of them, so as to hinder the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ shining into our hearts, with its revelation of the truth (cf. 2 *Cor.* iv. 4).

Our Lord has much to tell us about the deceitfulness of the world. He tells us that His kingdom is not of this world. It cannot, therefore, be estimated according to the judgement of the world. Indeed in His kingdom there is what has been called a complete 'transvaluation of values,' i.e. a complete reversal of man's natural judgement of the value of things. Many things which men naturally value here have no value there. Many things from which they naturally shrink here are found to be conditions of attaining true happiness there.

But death will open our eyes to the truth. Death will remove us from the stupefying atmosphere of this world. Death will set us free from the manifold deceits by which Satan tries to hold us captive while we are here.

II. THE SOUL ENTERING THE ETERNAL WORLD

The bodily senses have ceased to operate, and the soul is thrown in upon itself. It realizes now how transitory

and unimportant were many of the things for which it lived and spent its strength. They are gone now like a dream. Riches, honours, pleasures, what do they matter now? The soul knows their emptiness now. It knows too the emptiness of the flattery of friends, on which perhaps it lived. Death shows us the true measure of ourselves and of our actions. The soul that has passed into the world beyond does not think much of the things it has accomplished here. It sees only the results which those acts have left upon itself; the habits, the character that has been formed. That is the true measure of each life: not the things done, but what we have ourselves become in the doing of them. The things, the acts, in which we took so much delight, and for which perhaps we were praised and admired, have passed away; but they live on in the pride, the self-complacency, the self-love, they fostered in the soul. The objects which appealed to the senses and satisfied them once are nothing now. How terrible it will be for the soul to find that in spite of all it seemed to be, it had been living for that which is nothing! How differently it will judge of values then!

So think of your soul passing into the eternal world with all the accumulated acts and habits of this life, to have them manifested in their unalterable character for good or for evil. It does not pass into vacancy, but into the presence of God and of saints and angels, or into the presence of devils and the reprobate. It takes its place of necessity amongst those to whom it is akin. It goes to its own place. There is nothing arbitrary about the sentence pronounced upon it. It is the working out of the law according to which it has lived on earth. As we have sown, so shall we reap. If we have sown to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption; if we have sown to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (*Gal.* vi. 8).

III. The Necessity of Dying now to the World by Grace

We cannot be our Lord's disciples unless we are dead to the world, or at least are dying to it. By death He passed out of this world; and we have been 'baptized into His

death' (*Rom.* vi. 3). And this, which is the law of all Christian life, is surely emphasized by our call to the priesthood. Our vocation calls us to the closest union and fellowship with our Lord in His death as well as in His life beyond the grave.

Year by year, therefore, as we come into retreat, we ought to ask ourselves, Are we dying with Christ to the world, are we more dead to it than we were a year ago? Is this mystical death becoming more and more a settled habit of the soul? Death is not a mere transitory suspension of life, a separation from the world for a time, and then a return to it. Death is a permanent separation from the world. So the deadness which belongs to the Christian is not a phase of thought into which we may throw ourselves during retreat, and out of which we emerge when retreat is over. It is an abiding state.

How may we learn to persevere and grow in this habit of deadness to the world?

1. Death, as we have seen, will bring with it a true estimate of the world. We must anticipate that estimate now. We must learn to contemplate the things of time as the blessed in Paradise contemplate them. We must estimate their value as they estimate it. Think of Lazarus called back by our Lord from the grave (*S. John* xi). How did the world appear to him? What was his estimate of the relative value and importance of things? The Christian, like Lazarus, is in the world as one who has died to it. 'Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God' (*Col.* iii. 3).

2. Secondly, by prayer for the dead, and by meditation upon our own death. Prayer for the dead will make us feel the reality of that other world into which they have entered. And meditation on our own death will make us feel how near we are ourselves to that eternal world; how soon we may pass into it, and know by experience its solemn reality.

3. Thirdly, by cultivating a habit of active union with God. We can only die to the world in proportion as we learn to live in the consciousness of the new life which is in Christ. The attraction of the world, like the downward pull of gravitation, will always be too strong for us, unless

we feel the stronger attraction of the love of God. We need to realize, by many acts of faith, on all sorts of occasions, the gift of divine life which we have in Christ. We know that we have received this gift. It is not a matter of feeling, but a reality with which we have to identify ourselves by faith, i.e. by acting in its power. The Holy Ghost, if we give ourselves up to His control, will keep our hearts and minds gravitating towards God as truly and continually as the law of gravitation affects our bodies.

And then, as a last thought, consider the other side of this truth. We die in order to live. The final word is not death, but life. It is to this that we are to look forward, to the freedom, the power, the joy, of the new life which we have in Christ, and which will grow and make itself felt in us even now, in proportion as we die to self and to the world, and lay hold upon those 'powers of the world to come' (*Heb.* vi. 5), which we are already called to share. The more we are dead to the world in the fellowship of Christ's grace, the more shall we experience the truth of that eternal life which He has given us.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxiii.

REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION OF SAINT PETER

PREL. i. S. Luke xxii. 54–62.

Prel. ii. Contemplate the group around the fire, in the distance Christ before His judge.

Prel. iii. Pray that the love of Jesus may work in you true repentance and zeal for His service.

I. THE LOVE OF JESUS IN BRINGING PETER TO REPENTANCE

' The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.'

1. *Consider the love of that look.* How Jesus loved him ! In the midst of His own sufferings He still thought of Peter. He had known all along that Peter would deny Him. In love He had warned him, and now in love He looks upon him to recall him.

Oh, how Jesus loves us in spite of our sins—loves us that He may draw us out of our sins—loves us when we are in danger of sin—in strong temptation !

2. *The power of that look* It pierced the heart of Peter—melted him in penitence. All true penitence comes of that look of Jesus. We cannot have it by any effort of our own. Jesus must look upon us. His grace must shine upon the darkness of our hearts. Only so can we know what our sin is. Contrition is the gift of Jesus. We must ask Him for it—ask Him to turn upon us His look of love and power. Then we shall see what our sin has been—how it grieves the heart of God. Then we shall sorrow for it, hate it, forsake it. Then we shall love in response to love.

3. *The penitence that look wrought in Peter.* ' He went out, and wept bitterly.' How prompt it was. At once he ' went out '—left the place and company which had been the occasion of his fall. He distrusts himself now. All his self-confidence is gone. Broken-hearted, he ' went out, and wept bitterly.' Think how Peter spent the rest of that

night, and the next two days. Think how lasting his penitence was. It is said that ever after, as long as he lived, when he heard the cock crow, he would ask forgiveness for that sin, and dedicate himself anew to the love and service of Christ.

4. *How often Jesus has looked upon me, calling me to repentance!* How often He has stirred my conscience, made me feel the bitterness of sin, invited me to come and lay down the burden of my sins, urged me with love, or shaken my soul with fears if I would not heed His love!

How have I answered His look? Have I really yielded my heart to Him yet?

5. *Jesus is looking upon me now in my retreat.* If grace has in any way touched my heart, stirring me to fresh sorrow for my past sins, awakening fresh desires to give myself to Him, I may be sure that He is looking upon me with the same love and power with which He looked upon Peter—looking upon me that He may dispose me for perfect forgiveness, looking upon me because He wants me to give my heart more entirely to Him, and because He has still a work for me to do for Him, even as He had for Peter who had denied Him.

Let me yield myself now to the winning power of that look of Jesus. What is it urging me to do? To part with something which keeps me back from Him? To surrender myself more entirely to Him? Does it stir within me a longing for greater love, a more perfect service, a closer following, perhaps in Religious life? Whatever He asks of me, let me give it to Him now, in my retreat.

And let me pray for an abiding sorrow for sin. There is no grace I need more than this. It is the foundation of all else that God would work in me. It is the secret of growth in holiness and of perseverance. For the principle of growth is not love only, but forgiven love. We love much because we are conscious that much has been forgiven.

II. Peter's Restoration

In the joy of His resurrection our Lord thought of Peter's sorrow. By an angel He said to the women at the sepulchre,

' Go, tell His disciples and Peter ' (*S. Mark* xvi. 7). And the same day our Lord showed Himself to Peter (*S. Luke* xxiv. 34)—to Peter first of the Apostles. He knew that Peter needed special comfort, the assurance that he was still remembered and loved in spite of his sin.

Our Lord has still the same love for every true penitent. He longs to comfort the sorrowing soul, to assure it of forgiveness, to restore it to its former grace.

Consider how our Lord restored Peter to his place among the Apostles, and gave him a fresh charge as a pledge of confidence and love. It is early morning by the sea of Tiberias. The miraculous draught of fishes and the meal are over, and our Lord questions Peter, ' Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these ? ' Three times our Lord questions him, that by his threefold answer he may efface his three denials. And then our Lord gives him the charge, ' Feed My lambs, feed My sheep.' That is all the proof of penitence, all the satisfaction, our Lord demands—love, devotion, care for the flock Peter was henceforth to tend and feed (*S. John* xxi. 1–22).

What encouragement for penitents ! The restoration of Peter is a witness not merely that the penitent shall be forgiven, but that he may still attain the very highest place of trust and honour in the kingdom of grace. Peter did not lose his distinguished place among the Apostles. His repentance was more than a recovery : he rose to a far greater height than he had attained before. From this time he advanced rapidly towards perfection, till he attained at last the martyr's crown.

III. How Peter Fulfilled his Charge

Think of his after life, of all his watchful care and love of the flock for love of his Lord and Master who had given him the charge. Think how he learnt from his own past failure to be tender and compassionate to others. How the very Spirit of Jesus, His long-suffering, yearning love for souls, for the lost sheep and for the tender lambs, took possession of his heart. We seem to see it all in his Epistle, in that earnest charge he gives to his brother priests almost in the very words Jesus had given it to him : ' The elders

which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly ; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind ; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock ' (1 *S. Pet.* v. 1–3).

And now, is not our Lord asking each one of us the same question He asked of Peter, ' Lovest thou Me ' ? Yes, He must first ask that question, and force it home, though it pain us, before He can entrust us with whatever new work He has for us to do. If we do not love Him we cannot do His work, we cannot feed His lambs nor tend His sheep. But love will fit us for everything. It will give us insight, sympathy, tact, patience, perseverance, power. It will supply the lack of many natural gifts, while the greatest natural gifts without love will be powerless. If we love Jesus that love must overflow to others, and will win them to love Him too.

Thus, then, meditate upon the penitence and restoration of S. Peter, and learn from it hope and encouragement. Jesus loves you still, and has yet a work for you to do for Him, better work, it may be, than you have ever done before; and He will fit you for it, and help you in it, by the love for Himself which His loving forgiveness and continued trust will awaken in your heart. Much forgiven you will love much, and in the power of that love your life will be fruitful to His glory.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxi, xxii.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

S. Ignatius says that this meditation is to help us to contemplate the life of Christ, the eternal King. It shows us the purpose for which He came into the world, and now calls us to follow Him in His warfare against sin, the world, and the devil; and the affections of loyalty and generous devotion to His service, which it is intended to kindle in our hearts, are to be carried on into all our subsequent meditations on the mysteries of His Life and Passion. We are to consider in all of them what Christ our Lord chose for Himself as the most perfect means of glorifying His Father, and what He would have us choose in order that we may follow Him most closely in whatever state of life He may call each one of us to serve Him.

The *Directory* (xix. 2) adds: 'The disposition required in the soul of him who makes this Exercise is this, that so far as depends on himself he should tend towards that which is more perfect, if God should give him grace and strength. Whence it is plain that from this point the soul is already beginning to be prepared and disposed for the election of a state of life. . . . Thus with wonderful skill the soul is here stimulated by the Holy Spirit to desire perfection, in order that henceforth it may draw out and search into this same perfection in all the following meditations on the Incarnation, the Nativity, and other mysteries.'

Prel. i. Contemplate Christ, the 'Captain of our salvation' (*Heb.* ii. 10), calling all men to follow Him in His warfare.

Prel. ii. Ask for grace not to be deaf to His call, but prompt and diligent to obey.

I. The Call of Christ

S. Ignatius supposes the case of a temporal king calling his subjects to follow him in some great and glorious expedition such as the Crusades, of which doubtlesss he was thinking. And then he goes on to ask, 'If we give heed to such a call of the temporal king to his subjects, how much

more worthy of consideration is it to see Christ our Lord, the eternal King, and before Him the whole world, all of whom, and each one in particular, He calls and says: "My will is to conquer the whole world, and all My enemies, and thus to enter into the glory of My Father. Whosoever, therefore, desires to come with Me must labour with Me, that following Me in suffering he may likewise follow Me in glory."'

Consider who it is that calls you. It is the Incarnate Son of God, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords' (*Rev.* xix. 16). It is He to whom has been given 'dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed' (*Dan.* vii. 14).

He has a right to claim my service, because He is my Creator. All that I am and have is His gift. He is also my Redeemer. He has redeemed me from the power of Satan and of sin at the price of His own Blood (1 *S. Pet.* i. 18, 19). Therefore I am no longer my own. I owe myself and all I possess to Him. I am His servant and slave, and He has a right to command my service. Yet He does not command or force me. Rather He invites and calls me in love and gentleness. He desires a willing service, the service not of a slave, but of a friend.

II. Christ Needs My Help

He comes to wage war with Satan, the great rebel; to deliver all men from his power, and bring them back to the love and service of His Father. He comes to set up His kingdom here on earth. Not a kingdom of this world, based upon, and using, the powers of this world; but a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom in the hearts of men, a kingdom of supernatural life and power, a kingdom of 'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost' (*Rom.* xiv. 17).

In order to achieve this purpose He wants my help. It was for this that He founded His Church and has called me to be His priest.

But if I am to be a fellow-worker with our Lord in spread-

ing abroad His kingdom and winning hearts to His obedience, I must first conquer myself. It is in my own heart that I must first overcome the enemy. I must win the victory over my own self-love, my sloth, my sensuality, my pride and self-importance, my desire to be known, praised, admired, my love of influence and power, my love of the world and all it has to offer.

And the weapons which our Lord puts into my hands are the same as those with which He Himself waged war all through His life on earth—poverty, obedience, humility, patience, the Cross. By these weapons I too must overcome myself, the world, and the devil. Here, in my own heart, I must first establish Christ's reign and kingdom, before I can hope to bring others into it.

III. My Answer to His Call

It is not for me an open question whether I shall accept the call of my King or not. Long since, at my baptism, I was signed with the Cross ' in token that hereafter I should not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner, against sin, the world, and the devil ; and to continue His faithful soldier and servant unto my life's end.' To this I pledged myself anew at my confirmation and my ordination. It is a call therefore from which I cannot go back without perjuring myself and forfeiting all my hope of sharing in Christ's triumph yet to come.

All of us who are Christians are already pledged to the following of Christ. All of us, if we would ' enter into life,' must ' keep the commandments.' All of us must cast away whatever causes us to sin, even if it be like cutting off the right hand, or plucking out the right eye (*S. Matt.* v. 29). All of us must take up the Cross, and walk in the narrow way. All of us must endure temptation, and bear the toil, and persevere to the end.

But S. Ignatius does not stop here. He speaks of some into whose hearts God puts a desire ' to distinguish themselves ' in this warfare, to overcome themselves and the world more perfectly, to be more as Christ Himself and His Apostles were, to follow their King, if not in actual

poverty, at least in the spirit of poverty and detachment from earthly ties and claims, and to devote all their powers to the spread of His kingdom and the salvation of souls, in the sacred ministry of His Church.

And some there are whom our Lord invites literally to forsake all: houses, lands, brethren, parents, wife, and children; and to follow Him not merely in the spirit of the counsels, but in the actual practice of them in the Religious life (*S. Mark* x. 21, 29).

And to these, whether in the priesthood or as religious, who have followed Him most closely in the toils and sufferings of the warfare, He promises a special reward, an hundredfold now in this present time (verse 30) and a fuller share of His glory when His kingdom shall have fully come. 'Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me' (*S. Luke* xxii. 28, 29). 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne' (*Rev.* iii. 21).

Thus, then, meditate upon the kingdom and the call of Christ. He has a right to your service because He has redeemed you at the price of His Blood. He needs your help. He promises a reward which will be proportioned to the closeness of the following and the greatness of the struggle.

And in your meditation renew your allegiance to your King. Resolve once more to be a true soldier of the Cross, and to fight more faithfully and courageously against His enemies, which are also yours.

And pray also that you may be ready to follow our Lord in whatever degree of nearness to Himself He may call you to serve Him, now or hereafter, either in the perfection of priestly life in the world, or, if it should be His will, in holy Religion, that most signal token of His special love.

Imitation of Christ, I. i II. i, vii.

THE INCARNATION

PREL. i. Contemplate the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity in heaven, looking down upon this earth, and seeing the ruin and misery caused by sin, and in their love and pity determining that the Second Person should become Man to save the human race ; and then, when the fullness of time had come, sending the angel Gabriel to announce to the Blessed Virgin that she should be the Mother of the Incarnate Saviour.

Prel. ii. Behold in imagination the whole extent of the earth, inhabited by so many different races and peoples; and in like manner afterwards turn your eyes to the little chamber at Nazareth which is the home of the Blessed Virgin.

Prel. iii. Ask for an interior knowledge[1] of our Lord, who for us was made Man ; in order that you may love Him better and follow Him more closely.

I. THE WORLD WITHOUT CHRIST

Contemplate the world apart from the Incarnation, i.e. as it was before the Incarnation, and would be still if the Incarnation had never taken place.

Think of the great empires of the ancient world given up to idolatry, cruelty, avarice, lust, and wickedness of every kind. Think of S. Paul's terrible description of the heathen world in his day (*Rom.* i. 18–32).

Think of heathen lands to-day. Missionaries in India and Africa tell us how they *feel* the power that Satan has over those dark races, how he holds them in bondage under constant fear of evil spirits and of death. The power of Satan, they tell us, is manifest in those lands.

Or think of the condition of civilized nations to-day, that are nominally Christian. What multitudes there are living with no hope and without God ; living as though this life were all ; ' in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ . . . should shine unto them ' (*2 Cor.* iv. 4). Think of all those who are living only for

[1] i.e. a knowledge taught inwardly by the Holy Spirit. S. John vi. 45, xvii. 3 ; 1 S. John ii. 27 ; *Imitation of Christ*, III. i.

money, or for pleasure, living in carelessness and sin, and dying without faith, hope, or love.

And then let us turn to think of our own lives, what perhaps they once were, and might have been still, if it had not been for the gift of faith in the Incarnation, and the grace which has come to us through Christ our Lord. We look back upon our early life, and see perhaps years of carelessness and sin, of forgetfulness of God, and rebellion against Him; and yet to-day we find ourselves here, in retreat, brought back by God Himself, converted, penitent, absolved, called by God to the priesthood.

How can we think of all this and not feel our hearts to overflow with gratitude and love to God, who has so loved us! How can we think of it and not long to be instruments in bringing others to the knowledge of that faith and grace which are everything to us!

So let us thank God for the gift of faith in the Incarnation, and pray that a great fire of love may be kindled in our hearts, love for God, and love for the souls of men; that something of S. John's love of God and of Christ, and of S. Paul's missionary zeal, may pass into our hearts, and make our lives less unworthy of the mercy and the grace which have come to us.

II. The determinate Counsel of God

And, next, S. Ignatius would have us lift up our eyes from earth to heaven, and behold how the three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity, in their love and pity, determined that the Second Person should become Man to save the human race. Consider:

1. *The love of the eternal Father.* God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that we might live through Him (*S. John* iii. 16; 1 *S. John* iv. 9). It all comes from the infinite, eternal, changeless love of the Father's heart; His love for our lost and ruined race; His love for each one of us just as we are to-day in all our nothingness, and failure, and sin.

As we meditate upon this wonderful gift of Divine power and love, how can we doubt that the purpose of the Incarnation shall be fulfilled, that the mystical Body of Christ shall be made complete in the perfect number of the elect; that

all that the Father hath given Him shall come to Him, and that so coming He will in no wise cast them out? (*S. John* vi. 37).

And if we feel in ourselves the attraction of this love, and the desire to give ourselves to the service of Christ, how can we doubt that we are indeed part of the Father's gift to Him, and that He who has begun this good work in us will, if we will follow on, bring it to perfection at last in the day of Christ? (*Phil.* i. 6).

2. *The love of the eternal Son.* The love of the three Divine Persons is one love, even as their substance is one. All the love of the Father, all the love which God is, comes to us through the Son, who is one with the Father. And that love becomes in the Incarnation the love of a human heart that we may understand it better. 'As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you' (*S. John* xv. 9). 'Hereby perceive we the love of God'—not any mere finite love of a man, but the very love of God, manifested to us through the human heart of Jesus—'because He laid down His life for us' (1 *S. John* iii. 16). This love we are to bear in mind whenever we meditate upon the mysteries of the life and Passion of our Lord. The love which looks out upon us through the eyes of the infant Saviour is the love of God. The love with which He offered Himself upon the Cross for our sins is the love of the eternal God. And still as He looks upon us from the throne of His glory, or gives Himself to us in Holy Communion, it is the love of God which streams forth to us through His human heart.

3. And not less may we think of *the love of the Holy Spirit*, who at the first accomplished the mystery, overshadowing the Blessed Virgin, and forming out of her pure substance the Body of our Lord; and who still perpetuates the mystery in our new birth in Baptism, and whenever in the consecration of the Holy Eucharist He makes the bread and wine to be Christ's Body and Blood.

III. The Mystery Accomplished

And then turn to the chamber at Nazareth where the mystery of the Incarnation takes place. What a contrast to the world outside is this obscure and lowly home, and

the Blessed Virgin in her humility and entire surrender of herself to God! She is praying, and the angel comes in and salutes her with the utmost respect. 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. . . . Thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus' (*S. Luke* i. 28, 30, 31).

Consider the marvel of humility which this mystery discloses. The humility of the eternal Son of God, emptying Himself of 'the glory which He had with the Father before the world was,' and coming to take upon Himself the 'form of a servant' in the womb of the Blessed Virgin (*S. John* xvii. 5; *Phil.* ii. 7).

Thus from the first moment of His Incarnation He showed us what is the true relation of the creature to the Creator—humility, dependence, obedience.

And the humility of the Blessed Virgin. 'He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden' (*S. Luke* i. 48). There were many great and wise people then living in the world—kings, great captains, statesmen, philosophers, writers. Yet it was not to any of these that the angel was sent, but to a lowly maiden, unknown to the world, living in a humble home, in an obscure and despised village. 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' (*S. John* i. 46). Upon her the eyes of God rested, and saw in her the fit instrument for the mighty work He was about to accomplish.

So the first great lesson of the Incarnation is the lesson of humility. The most deep-seated wound of our nature is the wound of pride, and to cure that wound our Lord made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, chose to come into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh, to be born in poverty and obscurity, to be despised and rejected of men, and to die a death of ignominy and shame upon the Cross.

And now He says to us, not in words only, but by the example of His whole incarnate life, 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

Imitation of Christ, I. vii; III. viii, xiii.

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

PREL. i. S. Luke ii. 1–7.

Prel. ii. The journey to Bethlehem—the search for a lodging—the birth of the Child in the stable.

Prel. iii. Ask for an interior knowledge of our Lord, who for us was made Man ; in order that you may love Him better and follow Him more closely.

I. THE JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM

1. This journey is made in obedience to the decree of Caesar that all should go to their own city to be enrolled. How little did Caesar know, when he sent forth this decree, that he was preparing the way for the fulfilment of Micah's prophecy concerning the Saviour's Birth at Bethlehem (*Micah* v. 2), and for the foundation of a kingdom which was destined to overthrow his own ! It seemed to be the result of mere human design, but God was secretly over-ruling all. What security this may give us that God will surely bring His purposes about, however unlikely they may seem to human calculation. All times, all hearts, are ruled by Him. Whether men know it or not, they are surely contributing to the working out of His purposes. How deep is the wisdom of His counsels ! How well is He able to make all things work together for the fulfilment of His designs !

2. Contemplate the travellers. The Blessed Virgin is seated upon an ass which S. Joseph leads, and a little maid-servant, whom S. Ignatius puts into the picture, goes with them. Take the place of this little maid during your meditation, and try to see and hear, as with your own eyes and ears, what she saw and heard.

Admire the cheerful resignation of Blessed Mary and S. Joseph to the will of God, amid the troubles and fatigues of the long and wearisome journey at the most trying time of the year. Think of their rough and scanty food, their only shelter at night the common halting-places on the way.

Think what may have been their thoughts and words as they journeyed together. Think of their consciousness

of the Divine Presence with them, though as yet hidden in the Virgin's womb. Think how angels went with them and watched over them.

And then think how we too, like them, are ' strangers and pilgrims upon earth ' (*Heb.* xi. 13) travelling to our own city, the heavenly Jerusalem, the ' city which hath foundations ' (verse 10), of which we have been made heirs, and to which we really belong. Our way may be wearisome, and not without hardships and inconveniences, but we too have a Divine Companion, whose presence, if we recognize it, will make all the difference. ' When Jesus is present, all is well, and nothing seems difficult; but when Jesus is not present, everything is hard. When Jesus speaks not inwardly to us, all other comfort is nothing worth; but if Jesus speaks but one word, we feel great consolation ' (*Imitation of Christ*, II. viii. 1).

Grant, O Lord, that I may learn increasingly to cherish Thy presence with me. If I have Thee, I have all I really need, wherever in the world my lot may be cast.

II. The Search for a Lodging

They come to Bethlehem as unknown strangers, poor, and of no outward importance. They have no friends to give them shelter. There is no room for them in the inn. A stable is our Lord's birthplace, a manger His cradle.

How often has Jesus come knocking at the door of my heart seeking an entrance, and I have turned Him away. I have had no room for Him because my heart was filled with other things—the cares, riches, and pleasures of the world, or sins which I would not part with, unholy tempers which I would not banish. Let me open to Him now. He who did not despise the cold stable and the rough manger will not disdain the coldness of my poor heart. If I open to Him and welcome Him, He will repair what is decayed, and warm what is cold, and make me fit to be His dwelling place. All this He will work in me, poor and unfit and cold and rough and ruined though I be, if only I will open to Him and let Him in.

O be Thou born within my heart
Most holy Child divine.

III. The Father of the World to Come

He comes in our flesh, as the Son of Man, that He may be 'the Father of the world to come' (*Isa.* ix. 6), the Father of a great multitude who, as members of His Body, shall be raised to the participation of His own Divine life (*S. John* i. 12; 2 *S. Pet.* i. 4; 1 *S. John* iii. 2).

We think of the Blessed Virgin and S. Joseph, of the shepherds and the wise men, and feel how blessed it must have been for them to have been so near to the holy Child. We may join ourselves to them in spirit, putting ourselves in the place of that little servant maid of whom S. Ignatius speaks, 'looking at them and ministering to them in their necessities with all possible respect and reverence'; but all this falls far short of the reality of nearness to which we are invited, and which indeed we enjoy. Blessed as such nearness in the flesh was for those around the manger at Bethlehem, it could not meet our real need. Whatever influences of the Holy Ghost might have rested upon us, if we had been there, we should still have been separated from the Child by an impassable gulf. But Jesus came into the world in order to bridge that gulf and unite us to Himself in a real unity, to be indeed the Life of our life. He makes us members of His Body; His very substance He gives to be our food, that the anointing glory of the Holy Ghost which fills His human nature may flow down to us who are the members of His Body. His nature, with which we are united, cannot forfeit that anointing presence of the quickening Spirit (*S. John* vi. 51, 55, 57).

Thus the sacred humanity of Christ is a principle of new life to all who are incorporated into Him by Baptism, and fed with His Body and Blood in Holy Communion. It is a real power touching upon every part of our nature, and quickening it with His own Divine life.

While, then, we meditate upon this mystery of our Lord's Birth at Bethlehem, let us yield ourselves to Him to be quickened and transformed by Him. We have nothing to bring to Him but our own emptiness and misery, but He, if we give ourselves in our nothingness to Him, will make His glory manifest, filling us with His own life, transforming

us into His own likeness, and enabling us to act in the power of His Holy Spirit.

So let us kneel before this little Child and worship Him. Let us thank Him for all His goodness, above all for the gift of new life which He has brought us, and pray that we may ever show it forth by living in its power.

O most loving Jesu, to Thee would I give myself. Work Thou within me, for I can do nothing of myself. If Thou couldest give me all the powers of heaven, yet could I not use them. Take me then into Thyself, and do Thou use me. Help me to mortify myself, that, purged from myself, I may show forth the glory of Thy life. Through every faculty of my nature let Thy glory shine forth. Thou givest Thyself to me to be my Saviour. I give myself to Thee, a sinner needing to be saved. O make me wholly Thine, that I may live to the praise of the glory of Thy grace.

Imitation of Christ, II. vii, viii.

THE WORSHIP OF THE MAGI

PREL. i. S. Matthew ii. 11, 12.

Prel. ii. The Magi worshipping Christ and offering their gifts.

Prel. iii. Pray for an interior knowledge of the Saviour King, that you may love Him more dearly and follow Him more closely.

I. THEY PRESENT THEMSELVES AND THEIR GIFTS TO CHRIST

The star led them to Bethlehem. It led them on till it came and stood over where the infant Saviour was, 'And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His Mother.' How different was His presence-chamber from anything they could have imagined! They came to worship a King; but here are no tokens of wealth or power, no palace, no royal apparel. Nevertheless as soon as they come in they fall down and worship the Child; and as they worship they present their gifts, the offerings they had prepared and brought with them from their own country.

These wise men come to worship and to give: not to get anything for themselves, but to give themselves to Christ. He whom they come to worship cannot even speak to them. He lies there in His Mother's arms a speechless Infant. In silence they kneel before Him, and worship, and make their offerings, and then in silence go away.

Is there not a lesson for us here? As we come to Christ our first thought must be not what we are to get, but what we are to give. We must come that we may give ourselves to Him to whom we come. If this is not the purpose of our life, then it must be a failure. If our first thought is of what we may gain for ourselves, then very likely we shall be disappointed. But if our purpose is to give ourselves to Him who calls us, then there can be no failure, no disappointment. Whatever may be the outward apparent success or failure of our life, the inward indestructible

reality is there. Nothing can hinder that. In every place, at every time, and in all circumstances, we can give ourselves to Christ ; and as we do so we lay hold upon the great reality, the solid substance of our life. Amid all the changes and chances of outward things our true life is undisturbed. We know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him (2 *Tim.* i. 12).

II. They Worship the Child

The Magi knelt before the infant Saviour, and He did not speak to them a single word. They were content just to come and worship. How is it with us in our prayer? Are we content sometimes just to come and worship? Do we think all is lost because we do not hear Him speak to us —because He gives us no thoughts, and we seem to have no words in which to speak to Him? Are we content to come and worship in silence—content to come to our mental prayer, not to get, but just to give ourselves to Him? Is our time wasted because He does not seem to speak to us? Oh, not so, if we come really to give ourselves to Him. We kneel before Him in silent adoration and desire, and He gazes upon us in silent love ; and as He accepts our mute offering of ourselves, the virtue of His divine benediction streams forth upon us in all its transforming power.

So let us learn to come to our prayer in this spirit. Let us learn in patience to wait upon Him, yielding ourselves up with the silent desire of love to be transformed by Him. We bring to Him nothing but our emptiness and our misery; but He therein will make His glory manifest, transforming us into His own likeness through the power of His Holy Spirit.

And then, as we thus offer ourselves to Him, He will not let us go without His gift to us. And what will be His gift? That is His secret. He has a special and peculiar gift for each one among His true worshippers, some special manifestation of Himself to be the joy of each life, different for each, an incommunicable secret, which He makes known to each. It is like that new name of which our Lord speaks

in His message to the Church in Pergamum—indeed it is an earnest and foretaste of it—that new name which no man knoweth save he to whom it is given; some revelation of the glory and love of God, which he only can understand who has actually received it (*Rev.* ii. 12–17). If 'the heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy' (*Prov.* xiv. 10), so His revelation of Himself in the heart of each can be known only to him who receives it.

III. They Return Home by Another Way

1. They came, they saw, they worshipped, they gave. Now they return to their own country. It is for us, if we have found Jesus, never to leave Him. Gladly would we stay always in His presence. 'Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be alway praising Thee' (*Ps.* lxxxiv. 4). And yet it is no real loss to leave Jesus for Jesus, and this is what we often have to do. Jesus reveals Himself to us in some inward experience of mystery and love, and then we have, as it were, to leave Him at the call of some ordinary daily duty. But we need not really leave Him. If we depart by that way which He Himself points out to us by obedience, or by the providential ordering of our lives, He will go along with us, and speak in our hearts and cheer us with mysterious tokens of His presence.

2. 'By another way.' If we had been told the precise road they took, the 'way' would have been limited to an earthly meaning, the road to Jericho or some other place through which they would have to pass. But now the 'other way,' left thus undefined, has for us a mystic meaning. It speaks to us of Jesus, who is Himself the Way (*S. John* xiv. 6).

So when we have come to Jesus in Holy Communion, in prayer, or in retreat, we must be careful to go forth by this other way. We must not go back to our old faults and imperfections, acquiescing in them as if they were inevitable. Jesus to whom we have come, and who, if we constrain Him to abide, will go with us and be our way, has power to transform us. We may have to go back to the old work, the old

trials and temptations; but it must be by another way—doing and bearing all things now in union with Christ, and for the glory of God. Our coming to Christ changes everything, and therefore when we return to the old life and work it is to be with changed hearts and new powers. We must look for this transformation of ourselves. Each time we visit Jesus in prayer, in sacraments, in retreat, we must see that we come from our visit 'by another way,' more humble, more recollected, more detached from the world, more attached to our Lord.

So let us learn from these wise men to give ourselves to God. Let us trust ourselves to Him, leaving the world and all that seems so great and glorious in the world, leaving too our own thoughts and imaginations of what our life is to be. Let us not be discouraged or turned back if it does not in all points answer to our expectations. If we really give ourselves to God we shall find far more than we could have expected. We shall find not some poor ideal of our own, but Jesus Himself, Jesus in His power to transform us, Jesus in His love to be the very Life of our life.

Imitation of Christ, III. i, ii.

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

PREL. i. S. Luke ii. 22–35.

Prel. ii. The ceremony in the Temple.

Prel. iii. Pray for an interior knowledge of our Lord, thus offering Himself to the Father ; in order that you may love Him better and follow Him more closely.

I. OUR LORD IS BROUGHT TO THE TEMPLE

Go in spirit to the Temple and see what is passing there. It is a day just like any other. The ordinary routine of sacrifices and prayers is going on, with nothing special to mark it. A little Child is brought in, as all firstborn sons were brought. His parents are with Him, poor people, bringing the offerings of the poor, ' a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons,' for the purification of the mother. They are met by an old man, who takes the Child in his arms, offers a thanksgiving to God, and blesses the parents. That is all. There is nothing here uncommon or striking, nothing great or impressive, nothing to excite the feelings or interest the imagination. Just, it might have seemed, an ordinary everyday occurrence.

Yet it was in reality the solemn fulfilment of an ancient prophecy, and an event of the highest importance. The Infant in arms was the Saviour of the world, the true Son, the rightful Heir, coming thus secretly and suddenly to visit His own Temple. ' The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His Temple ' (*Mal.* iii. 1), and by that coming ' the latter glory of this house ' was made ' greater than the former ' (*Hag.* ii. 9, R.V.).

So we are reminded of the noiseless course of God's providence, His tranquil accomplishment, in the course of history, of great events long designed ; and again, of the suddenness and secrecy of His visitations, whether in the destruction of His enemies or in the deliverance of His own people. Meditate thus upon the secrecy and suddenness of all divine visitations, and the need of watchfulness for

them. The world will not be able to recognize them. To the multitude 'all things continue, as they were from the beginning.' 'Where,' they say, 'is the promise of His coming?' (2 *S. Pet.* iii. 4).

It is for us to live in continual expectation, looking for every visitation of our Lord, whether it be to ourselves as individuals, or to the Church, or to the world; watching too for His secret visitations to our own souls in prayer and meditation, in the whispers of conscience and of holy inspirations, in His sacramental visits; above all, watching for the great final visitation, 'looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the Lord' (2 *S. Pet.* iii. 12). Surely it is for us, His priests, to be living in this constant watchfulness and observance of the signs of the times, lest coming suddenly our Lord should find none to welcome Him.

II. He is Presented by His Parents

Behold our Lord, the firstborn of His Virgin Mother, brought to the Temple to be presented. The usual ceremonies are performed as in the case of any other firstborn son, but how different was this in reality from all other presentations which had ever been made there.

As His parents presented Him, He presented Himself. While yet an Infant He hastened to His Father's house to offer Himself a willing sacrifice, to do and to suffer all His Father's will.

He offered Himself with perfect understanding of all that the offering meant and involved. His whole life was one continual act of oblation and sacrifice. This oblation of Himself began from the first moment of His Incarnation; but His presentation in the Temple was His solemn and formal act of dedication. It was the beginning of that life of sacrifice and self-oblation which led up to the Cross of Calvary, and then, beyond that, to the perpetual oblation of Himself which He ever makes before His Father in heaven.

And then think how this, as every one of our Lord's acts, was done not in His own Name and Person alone, but as the Head of His Body, the Church. He gathered us up and

offered us in Himself. Every baptized person may be sure that our Lord had him in His mind, and offered him with Himself to the Father. And more especially may we think of this as gaining additional force in our case, who share His priesthood.

He presented us along with Himself; and now it is for us to make that act fruitful by presenting ourselves along with Him. We are reminded of this in every Eucharist, as in and through Christ 'we offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice' unto the Father.

We must take care that this offering is not in word only. Christ gives Himself to us in our communions in order that in every act of daily life we may present ourselves in Him to the Father. We must be learning to carry this spirit of oblation into all our life. How much more fruitful, and how much more full of joy, our lives would be, if we really tried to do this! We want to do it. We try perhaps in a general way to act for God and His glory, yet we often forget Him through long stretches of the day, and then our acts fall back into the mere weakness of nature. They lack the substance of the Divine life and glory.

We should try to make all our acts, all our life, more truly a presentation of Christ within us; to carry the power of our Eucharists into all we do or say, making all an oblation of Christ within us to the Father: our Office, as we say it in union with Christ, realizing that the words we say are indeed the words of Christ, that He speaks in and through us to the Father[1]; our work, trying more and more to do it with a right intention, and in His remembered presence; our trials and our sufferings, uniting ourselves to Christ's oblation of Himself upon the Cross, and learning, in this way, the deepest secrets of our union with Him.

III. Simeon's 'Nunc Dimittis'

Behold Simeon taking the infant Saviour into his arms.

Simeon had been promised the sight of the Saviour before his death, and now he comes into the Temple by heavenly guidance, and takes the Holy Child in his arms.

[1] See Instruction IV, p. 325.

Meditate upon the faith, the reverence, the joy, the love, with which the old man presses Jesus to his heart. What a reproach to our coldness, our distractions, our want of faith and love, when we receive our Lord in our communions! Simeon held Him once for a few minutes in outward embrace—we, how often, in our inmost hearts!

And then listen as he says his *Nunc dimittis*, 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation,' Thy Jesus. He has seen Jesus. The hope for which he had so long waited is fulfilled. Now he is ready, even glad, to depart. He has nothing more to desire. The world has no longer any attraction for him. 'The eyes that have seen Jesus find all objects beside Jesus unworthy of their regard.'

As we ponder this, let us pray that the eyes of our hearts may be opened to behold Jesus more and more as the one object of our desire, so that we may be detached from earthly things, and, like Simeon, glad to say our *Nunc dimittis* when our time shall come.

Imitation of Christ, III. xxxvii; IV. viii.

OUR LORD'S HIDDEN LIFE AT NAZARETH

PREL. i. S. Luke ii. 51 ; S. Mark vi. 3.

Prel. ii. Picture the cottage at Nazareth, its small rooms and poor furniture, the workshop where our Lord laboured by day, the place where He slept at night.

Prel. iii. Pray for an interior knowledge of our Lord in this Mystery of His hidden life ; in order that you may love Him better and follow Him more closely.

I. HIDDENNESS

Think of our Lord, conscious of immense powers for the work He had come into the world to do, yet content to live for thirty years a hidden and obscure life in the daily practice of domestic duties and virtues in the cottage and workshop at Nazareth.

The natural heart wonders at what might seem so great a waste of time and power. But our Lord knew better than we do what would be best for the world, and therefore we may be sure that this lesson of self-restraint and contentment with a hidden and obscure life, waiting God's time, is most important for us.

It is so natural to us to rebel against the monotony of a commonplace life and daily toil, to wish for change, to think we could serve God better in other circumstances and with wider opportunities. The example of Christ should convince us that it is best to accept what God appoints for us. If we do this we shall find that our life will be fruitful and happy. Those who try to serve God where He places them are always contented and happy ; and indeed it is they who often do most for the kingdom of God. This is one great lesson which our Lord taught us when He chose for thirty years to live as a poor and unknown boy and man in an obscure village of Galilee.

O my Jesus, instruct me that I may be contented and thankful with whatever Thou dost ordain for me. Thou,

the eternal Wisdom, didst accept a life of hiddenness and obscurity and humble toil. If Thou couldest show forth perfection in Thy hidden life at Nazareth, there can surely be no place, no circumstances, in which I cannot praise, reverence, and serve Thee, and by so doing attain that measure of perfection to which Thou, in Thy love, dost call me.

II. Obedience

As the beginning of all human sin was pride and disobedience, so obedience and the humility it involves are the most necessary of all virtues, and the foundation of all others.

Obedience is incumbent upon every one. However great, rich, learned, or powerful any one may be, whatever his station in life or his natural gifts, he does not cease to be a creature, and therefore dependent upon God and those whom God places in authority over him.

Why, then, is obedience so difficult? First, because of our pride and self-love. We think the position or the work assigned to us is too small or too mean; that it is not suited to our talents or our gifts; or we rebel because others, whom we think less fit, are preferred before us. And secondly, because we forget that all legitimate authority comes ultimately from God, and therefore obedience is a religious duty. It is also the mark of a strong and noble character. Well-trained soldiers, like the Guards, obey at once and willingly. It is raw recruits of poor material who murmur and would disobey, if they dared.

It is because our Lord knew that obedience is so great and necessary a virtue and yet to us so difficult, that in order to commend it to us He willed to practise it for thirty years, just those years of early and developing manhood when we are so apt to assert our independence.

And to whom was He obedient? Not only to His heavenly Father, but to creatures; and not only to S. Joseph and Blessed Mary, the holiest of creatures, but, as a labouring man, to all those who gave Him orders for work, and were no doubt often exacting and rude.

Think of the perfection of His obedience in all the details of that hidden and humble life in the home, the workshop,

and the village—how prompt it was, how exact, with what complete submission of mind and heart, because in those who gave commands He recognized the authority of His heavenly Father, and in everything that was commanded the indications of His holy will.

Meditate on this, and learn the value and glory of obedience. Think how especially important it is for priests to set an example of it in a world and age where obedience is so little thought of, and every man does 'that which is right in his own eyes' (*Deut.* xii. 8; *Judges* xvii. 6; xxi. 25); and even in the Church self-will is rife, and authority is set at naught. If our Lord had not been obedient, all His teaching and all the miracles of His life would have amounted to nothing. So whatever we do in self-will or for self-pleasing, however it may seem to succeed for the moment, will lack the supernatural fruitfulness of God's blessing.

We are very slow to recognize this, and the movements of self-will are so subtle that nothing but 'the eye-salve of humble obedience' will enlighten us to see the truth.

III. Labour

Labour is another of the great duties of man's life on earth. When God created man He placed him in the Garden of Eden 'to dress it and to keep it' (*Gen.* ii. 15), and when, for his sin, he was driven forth and the ground was cursed for his sake, labour was still the law of his life; only now it had acquired something of a penal character. It was no longer an exercise of pure delight, but 'in the sweat of his face' man was to eat bread. He was to earn his living with toil and weariness.

All are bound by this law of labour. 'Six days shalt thou labour.' We have not earned our living, nor our rest, unless we have worked. We have to work in different ways, manual work, mental work, or both; but in some form or other God wills that all should work.

Therefore when our Lord took our nature upon Him He submitted to this law of labour. As boy and man He worked as a carpenter; choosing such humble and laborious work not only because hard manual work is the lot of

the majority of men, but also in order to humble our pride and to show us that all work, even that of the daily labourer, is honourable and dignified, if it is done in a right spirit, and as an act of homage and love to God.

Consider, then, how our Lord worked 'in the sweat of His face,' cheerfully, contentedly, perseveringly, in obedience to God and man, and in the spirit of sacrifice and prayer. Let us see that by our diligence in work we glorify God. Idleness and sloth are grievous sins, and lead to manifold other evils. Labour is a great safeguard of virtue. It will save us from many temptations, especially from evil thoughts. S. Jerome speaks of work as 'the shield of the soul.' The devil easily gets the mastery over those who are enervated by idleness, which opens the soul to all kinds of evil impressions.

Moreover, time is one of God's gifts to us, one of His creatures, which we are to use for His glory and the work of our salvation. We shall have to give account of our use or misuse of it.

O Lord Jesus, fill me, I pray Thee, with Thine own Spirit, that I may understand and practise the example Thou hast given me, in Thy hidden life at Nazareth, of contentment, obedience, and daily toil.

Imitation of Christ, I. ix ; III. xiii, li.

OUR LORD REMAINING IN THE TEMPLE

S. Ignatius has purposely inverted the historical order of this and the preceding meditation, in order that we may first contemplate our Lord as the perfect model of those virtues which belong to the ordinary Christian life—the life of obedience to the commandments ; and then as giving us an example of that more complete detachment from earthly ties which is necessary for those whom He calls to a closer following of Himself in the practice, or at least in the spirit, of the evangelical counsels.

Prel. i. S. Luke ii. 41–49. Jesus, in obedience to the call of His eternal Father, remains, without the knowledge of His Blessed Mother and S. Joseph, in the Temple. They seek Him with anxiety and sorrow. In answer to their remonstrance He says, ' Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business ? '

Prel. ii. Picture the Temple courts and our Lord among the doctors.

Prel. iii. Pray for an interior knowledge of our Lord, thus early devoting Himself to His Father's service ; in order that you may love Him better and follow Him more closely.

I. The Call of God

S. Joseph and Blessed Mary represent the ordinary life. They return home to the duties of their natural sphere. Jesus, in obedience to the call of His Father, remains behind in the Temple.

In so doing He foreshadows that life of entire and permanent separation from earthly ties which He was afterwards to adopt, when the time came for Him to enter upon His public ministry and be wholly occupied in His Father's business.

A like call to separation from your old accustomed life, from home and friends, may come to you—a call to live in the spirit of the evangelical counsels as a priest or

missionary among the heathen, or in the actual practice of them in the religious life.[1]

This call may come at any age. But most often it is heard in early years; for youth is pre-eminently the age of decision, when important and far-reaching choices have to be made; and also because our Lord, while loving all, has a special love for the young, who are pre-eminently capable of generous self-devotion. Of one such young man (though alas! he failed to respond to the call) it is recorded in the Gospel that Jesus 'loved him' (*S. Mark* x. 21). And S. John, the youngest of the Apostles, was the one whom Jesus especially loved (*S. John* xxi. 20).

If such a call has come to you, or should come in your retreat, be sure that it is a token of our Lord's special love for you. It is a proof that you have already received much from Him, and that He wants to give you more. He gives you the call now, because all along He has loved you, and from the first has put into your soul the germs of those qualities of mind and heart which will enable you to understand the call and respond to it when it is given.

Welcome the call, then, if it comes to you. Value it highly, for it is above all price. Pray that you 'may not be deaf' to it, 'but prompt and diligent' to obey

II. The Cost of Acceptance

The call of God will often involve us in natural sorrow. When our Lord remained behind in the Temple it must have been a great sorrow to His tender heart to be separated from His Mother and S. Joseph. Natural affection drew Him after them, for He loved them with a perfect filial love, and His heart must have clung to them and to His home with more than an ordinary child's affection.

But God called Him at this time to surrender natural affection in obedience to a higher purpose. He did not

[1] The *actual practice* of the evangelical counsels is not for all, not even in all cases for the most generous and fervent souls; but the *spirit* of them is for every high-souled Christian, and certainly belongs to the vocation of the priest. See Father Rickaby, *Spiritual Exercises of S. Ignatius*, p. 80.

break away from natural duties and ties for any mere fancy, but only in obedience to the call of God. He knew that this was necessitated by the redemptive mission He had received from His Father. It was a part of that great sacrifice which was to find its completion on the Cross, and He accepted the pain with joy.

Nor was it only His own heart which felt the pain. Think what must have been the pain and anxiety of His parents when they realized their loss and, for three days, 'sought Him sorrowing.'

So if God's call comes to us we may have to see others suffer as well as ourselves: parents, brothers and sisters, relations and friends, from all of whom we must henceforth be separated to a great extent. Perhaps too they will not understand us or our motives, and that will be an added pain. They will complain as if they were wronged by what we feel bound to do. 'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?' And the only answer we can give is: 'I must be about my Father's business. God calls me, I must obey.'

So think of the natural sorrow in which the call of God may involve us—our own sorrow and the sorrow we cause others whom we love. We may have to leave much behind, parents, home, friends, much that the natural heart clings to, and rightly clings to, for it is God who has made family and home and given us friends. But if the call is clear we must not hesitate. We must be prepared, with Jesus, to suffer ourselves, and to give pain to others. 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me' (*S. Matt.* x. 37). Our Lord asks great sacrifices of those whom He loves the most and calls nearest to Himself.

III. The Promised Reward

When S. Peter on one occasion said to our Lord, 'Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?' our Lord answered, 'There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting' (*S. Luke* xviii. 28–30).

What does it mean—the 'manifold more'? Not that the man who gives up these things for Christ's sake and the Gospel's shall receive them back in a literal way, even though it be a hundredfold; for what, in that case, would be the use of first surrendering them? No, it means that he who gives up these things for Christ's sake, shall receive something more and better than he surrenders—possessions more precious than earth can supply; a life ennobled, enriched, harmonized; ties less vivid and passionate, but more spiritual and enduring; a love deeper, purer, more spiritual, for those he leaves behind. All the old affection will remain, but deepened, spiritualized, transfigured by the love of God, in whom and for whom he now loves his relations and friends in a new and higher way.

And then the second part of the promise, 'In the world to come life everlasting.' Not the mere deliverance from eternal death, but eternal life in its fullest and most perfect measure, some special nearness to our Lord amongst those who are 'called, and chosen, and faithful' (*Rev.* xvii. 14), virgin souls who sing the 'new song,' which no others can learn, and 'follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth' (*Rev.* xiv. 3, 4).

So think of the example which our Lord gives us in this mystery, leaving His Blessed Mother and His foster father, and remaining in the Temple to apply Himself exclusively to the service of His eternal Father; and if a like call should come to you, pray that you may have grace and courage to obey.

Imitation of Christ, III. x, xxxii.

TWO STANDARDS,

THE ONE OF CHRIST, OUR SUPREME CAPTAIN AND LORD; THE OTHER OF LUCIFER, THE MORTAL ENEMY OF OUR HUMAN RACE.

THE purpose of this Exercise is not that we may choose under which standard we will serve. We are already enlisted under the standard of Christ. Now, in this meditation, we are to study the actual warfare, the contrasted characters of the two leaders, their aims, and the means which each uses for his purpose.

Prel. i. Behold on one side Lucifer, and on the other our Lord, each desiring to draw all men to his standard.

Prel. ii. Ask for grace to know the snares of Lucifer and to avoid them; and on the other hand for knowledge of the true life which Christ reveals, and for grace to be faithful to His standard.

I. THE STANDARD OF LUCIFER

The first point is to picture to myself 'how the chieftain of all the enemy seats himself in the midst of that great plain of Babylon, as on a lofty throne of fire and smoke, horrible and terrible to behold.'

The picture is symbolical. The 'vast plain' represents the broad way leading to destruction, which so many tread (*S. Matt.* vii. 13). 'Babylon,' the city of confusion, symbolizes the trouble and strife which Satan never ceases to stir up in the souls of men, in families, in society, and between nations. The 'lofty throne' signifies his indomitable pride and cruel tyranny. The 'fire and smoke' of which it is composed are emblems of the agitation and darkness in which he dwells, and which he ever seeks to inject into the hearts not only of those who yield to him, inflaming their passions and blinding their minds, but also of the faithful followers of Christ in their hours of temptation and spiritual desolation.

Behold him calling together 'innumerable demons,' and sending them 'some to one city, some to another, omitting

no provinces, places, states of life, nor any single individual'; so that there is no one, in whatever place or state of life, even the holiest, and as we might think the most secure, who does not need to be continually on his guard. Most of all, we may be sure, his machinations are directed against priests, for if he can ensnare them and draw them away from Christ, he gains the greatest victories and inflicts the heaviest blows upon the kingdom of God.

Think of his relentless hatred of God and of men, because they have been created to fill those places in heaven which he and his rebel angels have lost for ever.

Think of his special hatred of Christ, his Conqueror, and how without ceasing he seeks to draw us away from loyalty to our Saviour.

Consider the subtlety of his temptations. He bids his demons tempt us by means of things which may seem at first sight harmless or even good, e.g. riches, honours, pleasures, positions of power and influence, but which in reality are full of danger, because they so easily lead to worldliness, luxury, and pride, and thence to all other sins.

Well may S. Ignatius speak of these temptations as 'snares' or 'nets,' for if we allow ourselves to be entangled in them they will soon become 'chains' which bind us with ever-increasing bondage. Ideals which we once cherished will grow faint and die out. Little acts of unfaithfulness will dull conscience and prepare the way for some serious fall, and the end may be the frustration, or even the abandonment, of our vocation. It is therefore of the utmost importance that each should carefully examine himself, and find out what is the special snare by which Satan seeks to hinder him and draw him away from Christ to his own standard.

II. The Standard of Christ

Contemplate our Lord setting up His standard near Jerusalem, the city of peace, for He is indeed 'The Prince of Peace' (*Isa.* ix. 6), and gives to all who come to Him 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding' (*Phil.* iv. 7).

'He takes His stand in a lowly place,' the symbol of His great humility, who 'made Himself of no reputation,

taking the form of a servant' (*Phil.* ii. 7). 'Fair' also 'and gracious to behold,' as we may think of Him in the synagogue at Nazareth where men 'wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth' (*S. Luke* iv. 22), or on the Mount of the Beatitudes, proclaiming the laws of His spiritual kingdom.

He is beautiful beyond all others, 'fairer than the children of men, and His lips full of grace . . . chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely' (*Ps.* xlv. 3; *Cant.* v. 10). Around Him He diffuses an atmosphere of purity and peace, which penetrates the inmost hearts of those who follow Him. His presence fills them with spiritual joy and consolation, lifting them up above the world into the fellowship of His own glorious life.

Listen to His words: 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls' (*S. Matt.* xi. 29). 'He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life' (*S. John* viii. 12). 'In the world,' He warns us, we 'shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world' (*S. John* xvi. 33).

As we realize, on the one hand, the danger of the world, how easily it takes possession of the heart and eats out the love of God; and on the other, the peace, the freedom, the security, the light, which Jesus gives to all who follow Him, shall we not pray that He will keep us steadfast in our allegiance to Himself, inspiring us increasingly with His own love of poverty, humility, and the Cross?

Poverty, Humility, the Cross—these are the devices blazoned upon His standard. They are also the safeguards of our loyalty, and the substance of that 'sacred doctrine' we are sent by Christ to preach to others. Yes, let us be sure of it, it is when the Gospel is preached in its unadulterated and austere simplicity, as Christ Himself lived and taught it, that it exerts its most attractive power. It is the poverty and humility of Christ that appeal to the hearts of men and have power to detach them from the world. It is the Cross that is the true magnet of souls, whether to draw them out of the world to Christ, or to keep them true to Him when once they have taken service under His standard.

Let us, then, be watchful against every attempt of Satan to draw us away from this which is the true spirit of Christ. He will seek to do so in manifold ways. He will try to rob us of simple reliance upon the power of Christ, and make us think that if only we had this or that of earthly means we should be so much more effective in our work. He will waken up in our hearts the desire to be prominent, influential, valued, admired, popular. He will seek to make us restless and discontented with our position. He will tempt us to envy the success of others, or on the other hand to give way to despondency and sloth because our powers are small. He will try to weaken our sense of vocation and loyalty to Christ; and so great is his cunning that if once we give way to him he will press us more and more, entangling us in his snares, and binding us with chains of ambition, or pride, or love of the world, or sloth, or some other passion, till we have become wholly his captives.

Our security must be to pray our Lord that we may be bound increasingly to Him in the spirit of poverty, simplicity, humility, and the love of the Cross; that we may know with ever deeper conviction that this is the only true life, especially for a priest, because it is the life which He, the eternal Wisdom and the infinite Love, chose for Himself, when He came into the world to do battle with the great rebel, and to rally all men under His victorious standard.

Imitation of Christ, III. liii, liv, lvi.

THREE CLASSES OF MEN

As we have meditated upon the Kingdom of Christ and the Two Standards, we have doubtless felt the desire to follow Christ closely and to attain to perfection in our vocation as priests. But in order to attain this end we must also will and embrace the means by which alone it can be reached. It is here that the real difficulty and struggle often comes in a retreat. It is easy to desire perfection, it is hard to submit ourselves to the discipline by which alone it can be won. We see the beauty of humility and desire to possess it, but we shrink from what really humbles us. We desire to be detached and free from earthly things, but we find it hard to renounce them in fact. We wish to be wholly filled with Christ, but we are not ready to empty our hearts of other things. We long to possess the pearl of great price, but we are not prepared to part with all else that we may secure it.

Therefore to test the sincerity of our desires and resolutions S. Ignatius gives us the following meditation 'On three classes of men, in order that we may embrace the best.'

Prel. i. Behold yourself standing in the presence of God and all His saints, desiring to know what is most pleasing to His divine goodness.

Prel. ii. Ask for grace to choose that which is most for the glory of His divine Majesty, and for the salvation of your soul.

I. The Three Classes

S. Ignatius proposes for our consideration three classes, literally couples, of men. But it will be simpler if we think of three individuals.

Each of them has acquired a fortune, honestly indeed and legitimately, but with some inordinate love of gain, or other faulty affection. Each wishes 'to find God in peace' and to save his soul, but each feels that his wealth, or at least his attachment to it, is a hindrance to his spiritual life,

perhaps even to his salvation, because it weds him to the world, and fosters in him avarice, or pride, or the love of worldly pleasure. Here, then, we have three persons, each of them ensnared by the first of those nets of which S. Ignatius speaks in the Two Standards, the love of wealth or of the world and its good things; and each of them wishing to be free to give himself to God, and to follow where He calls. So far they are all alike. But here the likeness ends, for they act very differently.

1. The first would like to free himself from that which hinders him from following the promptings of grace. But he cannot make up his mind to part with what holds him back. He thinks he desires to do so, and intends perhaps to do so some day, but in fact he never takes any steps to carry out his purpose, and dies still a slave to that inordinate affection, which has all along been a snare and a hindrance to him. Such a one *wishes*, but does not really *will*. He desires the end, but will not take the necessary means.

2. The second tries to take a middle course. He wants to keep his wealth, and yet not to feel its fetters. He thinks he can be in heart detached from it while still keeping it. Vain hope! for where his treasure is, there will his heart be also. Therefore whatever good desires he may have are fruitless and ineffectual. He remains really the slave of his attachment. He wills indeed in a sort of way, but not sincerely nor effectually.

3. The third is ready to part entirely with whatever holds him back, and to give himself whole-heartedly to God. This one alone really wills.

II. Application to Ourselves

S. Ignatius illustrates the dispositions of these three persons by describing their conduct in the case of a call to part with wealth which they feel to be a hindrance to their spiritual life, and their obedience to the promptings of grace. But we may apply the same principles to any other hindrance which stands in our way—a sin which holds us back from God, an inordinate affection which must be overcome, a

sacrifice which we are reluctant to make, a vocation which costs us much to accept. In all these cases there will be something like these three classes. There will be three ways of answering to the call of conscience and of grace. We may refuse, or delay till it is too late ; or we may take a middle course, and try to satisfy our conscience with an insincere and half-hearted obedience ; or we may resolve to take the highest course and do the will of God, whatever it may cost us.

No one, therefore, can flatter himself that he is acting sincerely towards God, much less that he has a generous devotion to our Lord, unless he is earnestly striving to attain to the dispositions of the third class, by a resolute determination to part with every hindrance, so that his heart and will may be free to follow our Lord in whatever way or state of life, and to whatever degree of perfection in that state, he may be called.

This is the grace we are to pray for in this meditation : the grace which will prepare us to make a good election according to the will of God.

III. The Need of Self-Conquest

If we find it hard to make the sacrifice God and our conscience demand, S. Ignatius bids us pray earnestly and again and again (even though our lower nature shrinks and fears lest our prayer should be granted) that God would give us grace to make the sacrifice whatever it may be, protesting before Him that we are ready to make it, whatever it may cost us.

This kind of prayer is most pleasing to God, and is the surest way to overcome ourselves and our reluctance. It was thus that our Lord prayed in Gethsemane. And if it should seem to us that in forcing ourselves to pray such a prayer we are using words only, without any real desire of the heart accompanying them, still we must not think such prayer is useless or unacceptable to God. Far from it. God looks to our wills more than to our feelings, to our efforts far more than to our success. Success is His gift to us, the struggle is our gift to Him. And these prayers which seem to us so dry and barren, and cost us so much

effort, are true acts of our will, and are of more value to God, and often of more profit to ourselves, than many warm feelings and consolations.

Imitation of Christ, I. xi, xviii, xxv.

NOTE.—Because this meditation is so important, especially in view of making a good election, the Directory says that ' the exercitant may well, for the sake of increased clearness, fashion for himself other similar illustrations, imagining for instance, three sick persons, each of whom desires to get well ; but the first will not use any remedies because of their bitterness, nor submit to any operation because of its pain. The second is willing to use some, but only such as he himself approves and judges fit, not those which are really suitable to his disease. The third gives himself up entirely to his physician, and allows him to prescribe whatever is necessary, or to cauterize him, or even to amputate a diseased member, if it should be necessary ' (Chap. xxix. 7).

THREE MODES OR DEGREES OF HUMILITY

By ' Humility ' we are to understand here a disposition of entire submission to God in all things, springing from a knowledge of His greatness and our own littleness. The three modes are increasing degrees of perfection in the attainment of this disposition. We may also think of them as progressive degrees of obedience, loyalty, and love, to Christ.

In the meditation on the Kingdom of Christ we have contemplated Jesus Christ, our King, and have professed our desire and purpose to follow Him in His warfare against sin, the world, and the devil. In the Two Standards we have learnt the nature of the warfare, and how our only safety is to fight under the standard of the holy Cross, and have prayed that our Lord would keep us faithful to it. Then in the Three Classes we tested the sincerity of our desire and purpose to follow our Lord as closely as possible, cost what it may. But something more is needed before we make our election or resolution. Our understanding may be convinced and our will, we hope, in earnest ; now, to complete our preparation, an appeal must be made to the heart. This is the purpose of the present meditation. It is intended to draw our hearts into such sympathy with the life and teaching of our Lord that, out of pure love for Him and the desire to be conformed to His likeness, we shall choose by preference a life in the spirit at least, if it may not be in the actual practice, of poverty, humility, labour, and the Cross, even though some less austere manner of life might be equally for the glory of God.

This is what will fit us to be Christ's apostles, not in name only, but in reality and power.

Prel. i. Our Lord saying to His disciples : ' Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. . . . If any man will come after Me let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me ' (*S. Matt.* xi. 29 ; xvi. 24).

Prel. ii. Pray for a generous will to embrace whatever is most for the glory of God, for your own perfection, and for the salvation of the souls committed to your charge.

I. The First Mode

The first mode or degree of humility is the fruit of the Exercises of the first Week. It consists in a firm and habitual purpose never to commit a mortal sin, nor even to deliberate about committing it, however great may be the temptation.

This degree is ' necessary to salvation.' It is in fact that disposition without which a penitent cannot be absolved. A penitent's purpose, however, though real at the moment, may give way under the stress of temptation ; but if he recovers himself at once and renews his purpose, he is not to be accounted as having fallen from this first degree of humility, for it is still his habitual purpose.

At first sight this degree may seem comparatively easy. But its perfect attainment and practice may at times amount to heroic virtue, as in the case of the martyrs, who were ready to part with life and undergo the extremity of torture rather than deny their Lord ; and of confessors, who practised the most rigorous penances and mortifications in order to conquer their temptations. Contrast with this the trifling things for which you have sinned mortally in the past, and may easily do so again unless you are firmly established in this first degree of humility.

Pray, then, earnestly for this grace. Renew your resolutions to avoid mortal sin and all approaches to it. However advanced in spiritual life you may be, you still need to cherish and strengthen this first degree of humility. Without it you cannot hope to attain the further degrees, and may be in danger at any time of sinning mortally and losing your soul.

II. The Second Mode

The second mode is more perfect than the first. It comprises two things, (1) that indifference or detachment of which we thought in our meditation upon the End and right Use of Creatures, (2) an habitual purpose and determination never to commit a deliberate venial sin, however great may be the temptation. These two things are so closely related as to be really one. For when indifference is the habitual disposition of a soul, it is morally impossible for it

deliberately to commit a venial sin ; since it is precisely a lack of indifference, or in other words an inordinate affection for some creature, which is the cause of sin, whether mortal or venial.

Am I seeking to attain to this second degree ? Am I firmly resolved to avoid venial sins, especially such as are deliberate, so far as I possibly can ? Have I such a measure of indifference, or detachment from creatures, as shall enable me to overcome temptations to these lesser sins ? Or do I think lightly about them, so that I am careless about trying to root them out, not remembering how greatly they grieve the Holy Spirit, hinder God's purpose for my sanctification, and mar my work as a priest ; and how, if not put away now, they must entail the loss of some higher degree of glory I might have attained in heaven ?

III. The Third Mode

The first two modes of humility are concerned with the avoidance of sin, and are based upon motives which belong to the first Week of the Exercises. The third mode proceeds from motives of love and devotion to our Lord, which belong especially to the second and following Weeks. It is not content merely to keep God's commandments and refrain from mortal or even from deliberate venial sin. It goes beyond this. Out of pure love for Christ, and in order to become more like Him and attain to a more vital union with Him, it desires to follow Him in those higher ways of sacrifice and obedience, of which He gave us an example in His own life of poverty, humiliation, and the Cross (cf. *Phil.* ii. 5–8).

Considering, then, these three modes of humility, or increasing degrees of obedience, loyalty, and love, to Christ, ask yourself how you stand with regard to them. Unless you have attained the first, and in some good measure the second, it is useless to think you can have the third. Indeed without the second you will hardly maintain yourself in the first. Venial sins often repeated, especially if they are deliberate, weaken the fervour of love and dispose the soul for sins that are mortal ; and certainly without fervent love a soul will never have courage to embrace the third mode.

Yet, do not be discouraged by the demands this Exercise makes upon you. There are degrees of perfection in each of the three modes, and if the highest are reached only by the most saintly and heroic souls, nevertheless every devout person may aspire to some degree even of the third; for what in truth is it but that love of Christ crucified which should burn in the heart of every true Christian, and especially in the heart of every priest?

This was indeed the spirit and desire of the Apostles. They rejoiced to be 'partakers of Christ's sufferings,' and to be 'counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name' (1 *S. Pet.* iv. 13; *Acts* v. 41). It should be the spirit of their successors in the Apostolic ministry.

If I cannot as yet reach this height, I will at least pray for grace to desire it, and I will begin to practise it by bearing with patience, and even gladness, all the little trials, humiliations, and crosses, of daily life, so as to be ready to bear greater trials if our Lord, in His love, should call me to bear them.

And I will pray that I may be more generous and courageous than I have been hitherto; that I may have greater love and devotion, desiring to be more closely conformed to my Lord in the spirit and love of poverty, humiliation, and the Cross; that I may aspire after complete self-conquest and real holiness. 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world' (*Gal.* vi. 14).

This is indeed necessary for me; for how shall I preach the love of Christ crucified to others, if I do not love and bear the Cross myself?

Imitation of Christ, II. vii, viii; III. xlii.

NOTE.—The spirit of the Third Mode or Degree of Humility may be illustrated by the burning words of the hymn often, though probably erroneously, ascribed to S. Francis Xavier, 'My God, I love Thee; not because' (*Hymns A. & M.* 106).

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

PREL. i. S. Matthew iii. 13–17.

Prel. ii. Our Lord leaving home and His Blessed Mother comes to the Jordan to be baptized. Behold Him going down into the water; and then, as He comes up and prays, the heavens are opened and the Spirit descends and abides upon Him, and the voice of the Father is heard, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

Prel. iii. Pray that you may have an interior knowledge of the mind of our Lord, as revealed in this Mystery; in order that you may love Him better and follow Him more closely.

I. DETACHMENT

Up to this time our Lord had been living at Nazareth in the home of His childhood and youth. Now He is to separate Himself entirely from it and to enter upon that state of complete dedication to the accomplishment of His mission, which had been foreshadowed when, at the age of twelve, He had remained behind in the Temple, and had answered His Mother's expostulation with the words, 'Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?'

Thus He gives us an example of the perfect detachment from earthly ties which is needed for the work of our ministry. As He left His home, and Mother, and friends, and the quiet life at Nazareth, that He might be free for the work His Father had given Him to do; so must we be ready to leave everything for the sake of the Gospel. 'No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier' (*2 Tim.* ii. 4). 'He that loveth father or mother . . . son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me' (*S. Matt.* x. 37, 38). It is not that we are to cease to love those to whom we are bound by natural affection, but our love is to be converted into a spiritual affection. We must love them with that love which divine charity demands, as those who are dead to the world, living only to

Christ, and taking Him in place of parents, brethren, and all else.

Thus it is that we must be ready to leave everything, if our Lord calls us to make the sacrifice ; ready to do violence even to those natural affections, good and holy in themselves, which may be a hindrance to that warfare and ministry to which we are dedicated. Unless we are ourselves free from worldly ties and cares, or at least really detached in heart from them, we shall not be able to draw others from carnal things to spiritual, and to set them free from the ' nets and chains ' by which the world and the devil have ensnared and bound them.

II. Humility

Behold our Lord in the midst of the crowd of publicans and sinners. He associates Himself with sinners whom He has come to save. S. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. Thus our Lord's coming to receive it was a great act of humility. It was more than bearing meekly the reproach and contempt heaped upon Him throughout His life. It was subjecting Himself voluntarily to the baptism of repentance as though He were Himself a sinner.

As He began His earthly life with the humility of the Incarnation, so will He begin His ministry with this great act of self-humiliation, not only hiding the perfections which were in Him, but assuming the semblance, and taking the place, of a sinner. How different are God's thoughts from ours ! We think that our ministry will be fruitful in proportion as we are highly esteemed for our talents and have a reputation for sanctity. Our Lord did not judge so. He came openly to the Baptist to be baptized with the baptism of repentance, associating Himself with those who came ' confessing their sins,' though He was in truth the only sinless One.

What a contrast we present in this to our Lord ! So often we try to hide our defects, and are anxious to wear the appearance of virtues and qualities we do not really possess. We are disappointed and hurt if people disregard or despise us. Oh, how blind we are ! How slow to learn that all success in our ministry, all fruit that shall be for the glory

of God, must begin from self-abasement ! We profess our desire to glorify God, to sanctify our souls, and to save others ; let us begin by washing away in a real baptism of repentance all pride, ambition, and greed of worldly esteem. Then we may hope that we are beginning to follow in the steps of Christ and His Apostles, and that our ministry, like theirs, will be fruitful to the glory of God.

III. Prayer

It was while our Lord prayed that the heavens were opened and the Spirit descended and ' abode upon Him ' (*S. Luke* iii. 21 ; *S. John* i. 32).

The Spirit descending upon our Lord as He prayed, and abiding upon Him, may symbolize for us that union with God which we may hope to gain from our practice of prayer. Prayer unites the soul to God in its inmost essence, especially if God should lead us on to any of the higher states of prayer, the prayer of affection, or of simplicity, or beyond that to contemplation. Such prayer of intimate communion with God leaves the soul recollected and united to Him when the time of prayer is over, and we go forth to our work in the world.

To this state of habitual recollection and prayer all priests are invited, and it is especially necessary for those who are engaged in active work, inasmuch as they are thereby more exposed to the distractions of the world. They above all others need this abiding spirit of prayer, and must seek so to persevere in meditation that God may be able to bring them into this higher state.

The priest must not think that he is to continue all his life in the practice of discursive meditation, as if God had no higher gifts of prayer to bestow. He must be training himself to receive higher gifts, and this not only for his own sanctification but also that he may be able to teach and guide others in their life of prayer.[1]

Moreover, unless the priest is living in this close union with God, which only the persevering practice of prayer can win,

[1] See Instruction VI, p. 333.

he will not be able to speak in the power and unction of the Holy Ghost. His words will fall only on the outward ears of those who hear him : they will not touch and penetrate their hearts.

How well the Apostles understood this when they appointed deacons to attend to the more external duties of the ministry, in order that they might give themselves ' continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word ' (*Acts* vi. 4).

Let us then give ourselves perseveringly to prayer and the study of Holy Scripture, that we may come thereby to such an intimate and abiding union with God, as may be in us the realization of that divine sonship which was made ours at our baptism. Then we too shall be able to hear the voice of the Father speaking in our hearts, ' the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God ' (*Rom.* viii. 16), and in the confidence of that testimony we shall find the inspiration of our life and the strength of our ministry.

Imitation of Christ, III. iv, vii, xxi, xxxi.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

In the meditation on the Two Standards we saw the two leaders, Christ and Lucifer, each unfurling his banner and seeking to gather all men to it. Now we are to contemplate our Lord meeting the enemy in actual battle, and to learn from Him the nature of the conflict, and how we too are to take our part in it.

Prel. i. S. Matthew iv. 1–11.

Prel. ii. Jesus weak and worn with hunger. Satan coming to tempt Him.

Prel. iii. Pray for an interior knowledge of our Lord, who for our comfort and instruction suffered Himself to be tempted by the devil; in order that you may love Him more and serve Him better.

I. The Necessity of Temptation

At our Lord's baptism the heavens were opened, and the voice of the Father was heard, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (*S. Matt.* iii. 16, 17).

Up to this time our Lord had lived a hidden life, unknown to men, but watched by Satan. Satan marvelled at that holy life, but was ignorant of its secret. He did not yet know that this was indeed his predestined Conqueror. The voice from heaven proclaimed the dreaded truth. This was the signal for the battle to begin. The first great act of our Lord's public ministry was to encounter Satan.

Satan comes to Him to test the truth of His Divine Sonship. 'If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.' It was necessary that our Lord should have His Divine Sonship put to this test—necessary not for Himself, who knew it and could not forfeit it—but for us, that He might develop within His human nature the graces which we need for our conflict with the same adversary.

In us too the reality of our heavenly sonship must be tested, if we are to lay hold upon it and appropriate it. We must learn, in the conflict with temptation, that in Christ

we have a life which is not sustained by earthly things, but by God Himself; and that this life of divine sonship is the great treasure of which Satan is ever seeking to rob us, and which we have to guard at all costs.

II. The Completeness of Temptation

1. First, Satan tempted our Lord in the extremity of human weakness. It may be necessary for us also to pass through this trial of weakness. Bodily weakness, mental weakness, weakness from want of external means and resources—all these forms of weakness will test our faith in God, and the reality of our sonship in Christ.

Or we may have to feel the weakness of the Church in the world, contrasted with the power of wealth and political organization; to see her left as if forsaken by God, the scorn of men, and a prey to the evil one.

How apt we are to think that the Church ought to manifest her divine life and strength by outward tokens of power! But no; the Church is to live on through outward weakness, sustained by hidden gifts of grace pledged to her as the Body of Christ. Not by bread, not by that which is outward and visible, not by any powers of nature, but by dependence upon God, by the supernatural life of grace, does the Church, and each member of it, really live.

2. Again, the devil carries our Lord to the pinnacle of the Temple and bids Him cast Himself down in the sight of all the people. What if they were to see Him descending unharmed? Would not that compel their belief and acceptance of Him as the Messiah? Would it not have been one of those very signs which they were so often demanding? (*S. Matt.* xvi. 1; *S. Mark* viii. 11). Yes; but it would not have been in 'the ways' of God's appointment. Not in such ways was our Lord's work to be done, and the world redeemed.

In like manner Satan may tempt us to act in pride and self-will; to rely on divine help where and when it is not promised; to seek to do some notable and striking thing, but outside of God's appointment. Satan will suggest

many specious reasons why we should do it. 'It will be for the good of the Church. It will produce an effect, and compel attention to the Church's claims. It will win the homage of men.' In such ways our spiritual nature will be tried. Our safety is to keep jealously within the ways of God's appointment. Whatever powers, natural or spiritual, God has given us, can only be used safely when we use them in conformity with His will and the appointments of His providence. The more Satan suggests to us great and ambitious projects, the more must we suspect them. We are not to judge whether to do things by any probable results they may seem to promise, but only when we are sure that it is the Spirit of God that prompts us.

3. And then the third temptation. Satan has learnt now that Jesus is indeed his predestined Conqueror. He knows the promise that the heathen shall one day be His inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth His possession (*Ps.* ii. 8). He knows too the long painful process by which this consummation must be reached—the rejection, the suffering, the Cross—for it would be his care to stir up men's evil passions so as to bring these things about. All this, we may believe, Satan presented to our Lord in one swift mental picture. But might not the desired end be reached in some shorter and easier way? Here is the temptation. Satan offers to make over to Christ his whole power in the world on one condition, viz. that our Lord would accept it as a gift from himself. One transitory act of homage would effect the acquisition of the world, and accomplish in a moment that which otherwise was to be so slow and laborious, so full of suffering and apparent failure. But if our Lord could have yielded to the temptation, the result would have been as transitory as the act.

So Satan may tempt us to be impatient with the slowness of God's work; to think that by some little compromise with the truth, some little act of doubtful morality, we shall effect a great result and save an infinity of trouble. But all so gained would be transitory. Satan may have the kingdoms of this world at his disposal, but only for a short time. To gain the adherence of the world by any compromise with truth or moral rectitude would be to gain

only what must perish and come to nothing. We are not here to gain the world, but to die to it, and in thus dying to win it from Satan's grasp.

III. Our Personal Struggle

Satan is not ubiquitous, but his movements are those of a spiritual nature, and he has vast hosts of evil spirits at his command. He assails us sometimes by violence, sometimes by fraud. Although he is the prince of darkness he can assume such outward glitter as will make him appear an angel of light (2 *Cor.* xi. 14). By the speciousness of his proposals he will seek to confuse our minds and draw us away from the simplicity of Christ.

He may assail us individually or collectively ; as solitary priests, or as a class, a Church, a nation. The passions aroused by controversy, the fashions of thought which dominate society at various times, the great movements which sway the world, are largely his inspirations. Whatever makes men set up a human standard, or rely on earthly instrumentalities, or strive after earthly aims, in place of obedience and hope in God, is an artifice of his fraud.

Our only way of escape from his deceits is to walk by faith, recognizing the divine Sovereignty as the sole power, and the divine Law as our sole guide. Thus shall we live in the security of our divine sonship. God has created us to conquer Satan by the obedience of faith, the endurance of hope, and the simplicity of childlike love.

Imitation of Christ, I. xiii ; III. vi, xxxv.

TWO DISCIPLES FOLLOWING JESUS

PREL. i. S. John i. 35-42*a*.

Prel. ii. Contemplate our Lord coming from the wilderness to Jordan. He walks apart in silence. The Baptist proclaims Him as the Lamb of God. Two of his disciples hear him speak, and follow Jesus.

Prel. iii. Pray for an interior knowledge of our Lord, in order that you may love Him better and follow Him more closely.

I. 'BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD'

Place yourself along with these two disciples and look upon Jesus as He walks. Contemplate Him. How changed since a few weeks before He had come to Jordan to be baptized, and the Holy Ghost had descended upon Him, and the voice of the Father had proclaimed Him to be His beloved Son! Then He had come in all the freshness and loveliness of thirty years spent in the peaceful home at Nazareth. Now He comes bearing the traces of His long fast and conflict in the wilderness. He has entered upon the great struggle with Satan which is to end only on Calvary, and the marks of that struggle are already beginning to appear upon Him. Already He appears as 'a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief' (*Isa.* liii. 3). A few months more and the Jews will say to Him, 'Thou art not yet fifty years old' (*S. John* viii. 57), as if He were already past the prime of life. But if the natural beauty of early manhood is gone, there is a supernatural beauty which attracts hearts that are prepared.

He comes again to Jordan to see what hearts there are ready to receive and follow Him. He walks in silence. He does not ask any one to follow Him, for He knows that hearts that are not moved at the sight of Him will not be drawn by words. The Baptist had spoken the one needful word. He had called his disciples to penitence, and then had pointed to 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' That was sufficient. Penitent hearts, hearts that the Spirit of God had touched, would respond to the

simple sight of Jesus as He walked. They would feel the compelling power of the vision, though to the natural heart there might be 'no beauty that we should desire Him' (*Isa.* liii. 2).

So our Lord comes to us in our retreat to see if our hearts are prepared to follow Him. The worldly heart will take no heed. It will go on its way. It will return to its busy commerce by the sea of Galilee or to the worldly church life of Jerusalem. But Jesus passes by to see if there are any who are not satisfied with such things as these, who feel the emptiness and unsatisfying nature of all earthly things; any who feel the burden of sin, and long for deliverance from it.

II. The Two Disciples Following

Let us unite ourselves to these two followers in the spirit of true discipleship, the discipleship of penitence. Without penitence we cannot follow. The Lamb of God may be pointed out to us, but without penitent hearts we shall not care to draw near to Him. The one, S. Andrew, who will presently seek his brother and bring him to Jesus, may represent to us the missionary life; the other, S. John, the contemplative life. Both are drawn to our Lord, for both are penitents longing for a Saviour.

Jesus goes before. He has not yet turned His face towards them, but He knows that they are following. So if we are following Jesus it will often seem as if His face were turned away. He makes as if He would go further. Thus He draws us on to follow. Then at last He will turn and say to us, as He said to them, 'What seek ye?' He will not be satisfied till He knows what we are seeking. Is it some end of our own? Our own enjoyment? The furtherance of some work we have at heart? Are we seeking Him because we hope that He will give us power and success in what we do? He will not be satisfied unless we are seeking Him for Himself.

They said, 'Master, where dwellest Thou?' That is indeed the reason why we should seek Him, that we may dwell with Him. We must come because we desire that His home may be our home, His food our food, His clothing our clothing, His manner of life our manner of life. We must

have no preconceived opinions of our own as to what the dwelling-place of Jesus ought to be. Enough that we are with Him. Like Ruth we must say, 'Intreat me not to leave thee . . .; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge . . . where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried' (i. 16, 17); or as Ittai answered David, 'As the Lord liveth, and as my soul liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in life or in death, even there also will thy servant be' (2 *Sam.* xv. 21).

Our one desire must be to be with Jesus. In our active life, while we seek to bring souls to Jesus, we must still abide with Him, and be more closely bound to Him by whatever work He enables us to do. In our contemplative life, it is not intellectual illumination or our own enjoyment that we are to seek, but the more entire surrender of ourselves to Him, to rest in His love.

III. They Spend the Day with Jesus

'Come, and ye shall see.' The coming must precede the seeing. Our Lord does not tell us where He dwells, but bids us come, and then we shall see. How indeed could He tell us where He dwells? His dwelling is not in any external place, but in contrite and humble hearts. 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit' (*Isa.* lvii. 15). Yes, His dwelling is in the hearts of men, in our own hearts if we are contrite and humble. This is the only way in which we can see where He dwells. We must purify our hearts in order that He may be revealed there (*Gal.* i. 16). So must we follow on to see and know Him, not content merely to know about Him or to hear of Him from others, but longing to see Him with a true interior vision for ourselves. This is the experience we long to come to: nothing less can really satisfy us (*S. John* iv. 42).

'They came and saw . . . and abode with Him that day.' What they saw and heard; how our Lord may have opened to them the Scriptures, as afterwards He did to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus; or how He may have revealed to them the secrets of their own hearts, is left to

our devout meditation. Listen, at all events, to what He says to you now, as you abide with Him in your retreat—what He says to you about your vocation, about the way in which He wants you to follow Him.

Lastly, think of the issues of that day spent with Jesus.

1. The two disciples were confirmed in their faith. They had believed the testimony of the Baptist; now they believe not because of what he had said, but because they have seen and heard our Lord Himself, and know now with a knowledge, which nothing hereafter can shake, that this is indeed the Saviour of the world, the only One who can take away their sins and satisfy the deepest longings of their hearts.

2. Andrew brings his brother Simon to Jesus. To know Jesus is perforce to become an evangelist. 'The proof of our having really found Christ, is seen in our finding our brother and bringing him to Jesus' (Bede, *Hom. in Vig. S. Andr.*). The knowledge and love of Jesus will kindle in our hearts the love of souls, and at the same time our ministry to souls, if carried on in the power of His love, will increase our love for Him. 'We find Christ by caring for the souls of our brethren' (ibid.).

Thus let us seek to abide with Jesus through all the days of our earthly life. If we do thus dwell with Him in time, we shall see hereafter where He dwells eternally with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost.

Imitation of Christ, I. 1; II. vii, viii; III. i, ii.

THE CALL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

PREL. i. S. Mark iii. 13–15.

Prel. ii. Our Lord calling to Himself 'whom He would,' and of them choosing twelve to be His Apostles.

Prel. iii. Pray that you may respond with thankfulness to the love and grace of your vocation.

I. THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH HE CALLED THEM

1. 'That they should be with Him.' By this close companionship they were to be trained and fitted for their work. They were to learn who and what He was; to be taught to rely on Him, to experience His love and care for them, to drink in His Spirit, and by daily contact to be made like unto Him. This was the first essential for their Apostolic work, 'that they should be with Him.'

It is the same with us who are called to the Apostolic work of the sacred ministry. We must be with Jesus. We are called and commissioned not merely to speak of Him, to be teachers of His doctrine, and stewards of His mysteries, while yet personally unknown to Him, and He to us, as an earthly sovereign may have many subordinate officers personally unknown to him. No; each priest is called to be with Jesus, to be His personal friend, to live, and speak, and act, in a real union of heart and life with Him.

2. 'That He might send them forth to preach.' First the daily companionship and personal knowledge, then the preaching. The power of our words, whether in the pulpit, or in the confessional, or in any other kind of intercourse with others, must come from our being with Jesus. As the battery charged with electricity gives out its spark when we touch it, so, if we are living in union with Jesus, the fire of the Holy Ghost will flash forth along with our words and acts. We are sent to communicate a life which we have first received ourselves and with which we are, as it were, charged, so that its power comes forth along with all we do or say.

3. He ordained them to preach not by word only but by

example. As He, the Incarnate Word, was ever speaking by His simple presence among men, so that same Word, living in the Apostles, was to speak through them. Their whole life and conversation was to be a witness to Him, a preaching of Him, because He lived in them. So with us. If we are living in union with Christ, then our presence will bring Him near to others.

II. The Power He gave them

Our Lord gave His Apostles ' power to heal sickness, and to cast out devils.' If we are true to Him, He will give us power, not merely *ἐξουσία*, authority, but *δύναμις*, real potency, ability, power in the truest sense of the word. Both indeed ought to exist together in the sacred ministry of the Church. The authority is given in ordination, the power is the Spirit then received. We must be stirring up this gift, living and acting in its power, if we are to work those miracles of grace in the souls of men, of which the healing of sickness and the casting out of devils were the outward types It is this power which alone can give vitality and stability to any work we do. Whatever is not done in this power of the Spirit of Jesus and in union with Him, will crumble away. It will not be a living work. Whatever it may seem to effect for the moment, it will have no abiding vitality or fruitfulness. Nothing can last, nothing can withstand decay and death, but what has in it the life of Jesus. Our works must be begun, continued, and ended in Him.

1. *Begun in Him.* Whatever has its beginning only in our own natural desire and activity will soon expend its energy. What has been begun in the Heart of Jesus will last on with the abiding and expanding energy of His own immortal life. Thus we must look up to our Lord at the right hand of God, to originate our actions, to guide us into our work, to show us what to do.

2. *Continued in Him.* Jesus Christ has willed to do His work on earth by the instrumentality of men ; but we can only be His instruments so long as we abide in Him. Is it not the case that our work often fails and comes to nothing

because we do it in our own strength, and only after it is done ask our Lord to bless it? We are so eager to begin that we do not seek His guidance and ask His blessing first; and then we are so absorbed in the interest of it, or so overburdened with anxiety about it, that His presence with us while we do it is forgotten. So the work fails, or partly fails, or at least it does not reach the power and perfection it might have had. Yes, not only the original impulse but the motive power throughout must come from Him. Our works must be continued in Him.

3. *Ended in Him*, committed to His keeping. We must not be over anxious about any work we have done. If we are anxious about some soul we have tried to help, remember that Jesus loves that soul far better than we do, and can deal with it with the sure touch of infinite wisdom, knowing all its needs, and meeting them with endless resources. So let us do what we can, acting in union with Jesus, and then commit the result to Him.

III. The Sort of Persons our Lord chose

1. They were poor men. He did not choose them because they were men of wealth, or social position, or learning, or eloquence; but because they had come to love and trust Him. His love for them had awakened in them a capacity for corresponding to His love. 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life' (*S. John* vi. 68). They had come to realize that He was more to them than all the world besides. It was a love still rudimentary, still very imperfect; but Jesus saw that it had a capacity for growth, and so He called them.

2. We need not, then, be distrustful or despondent because we may not have much in the way of natural powers and gifts, or because our natural character may have many failings. If only we have love for Jesus and faith in Him, that is enough. He has chosen us, not for what we are, but for what we are capable of becoming. No natural gifts, however great, could avail by themselves; they might even hinder. They can be nothing but a hindrance till we have learnt their insufficiency. Our power is in the

call of Jesus, and the love which that call awakens. That was what fitted the Apostles for their work ; it will fit us also. It will supply all lack of natural gifts ; not, of course, our neglect in cultivating what little store we have ; not the burying of our one talent, because it is but one, and that perhaps a little one ; not the sloth which will not use the gift of grace, nor stir up faith. But where there is an honest and good heart, God is abundantly able to supply whatever is needed in those to whom His word comes.

3. And it is this love of Jesus which alone can keep us faithful to Him. One of the Apostles lost it, and fell away. Covetousness, ambition, the love of the world, got possession of Judas and killed out the love of Jesus. Oh, we must be careful that the love of Jesus is supreme in our hearts! We must put away from us the love of the world, and all that is of the world, for if any man love the world the love of Jesus cannot be in him (1 *S. John* ii. 15). We must be ready to follow our Lord, as we saw Him in our meditations on the Kingdom and the Standards, in the way of poverty, humility, and the Cross. Then we shall be kept faithful to Him. Then we shall be His apostles indeed, able, through His grace, to do whatever He calls us to do.

Imitation of Christ, III. xxii.

S. PETER WALKING ON THE WATER

PREL. i. S. Matthew xiv. 22–31.

Prel. ii. Our Lord walking on the sea, and S. Peter saying, ' Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.'

Prel. iii. Pray that whatever our Lord calls or invites you to do, you may have courage to make the venture of faith and obey.

I. S. PETER'S VENTURE OF FAITH

' Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.' How like S. Peter's loving and impulsive temperament! As soon as he saw Jesus he wanted to go to Him.

But on this wild, blustering night there was something more—not only the eagerness of love, but a great venture of faith. ' Bid me come unto Thee *on the water*.' He too would walk upon the water in order to come to Christ. He is ready (so he thinks) to do what is difficult, dangerous, beyond the power of nature. Yet not without our Lord's bidding. Christ's call must go before his venture.

Our Lord welcomed his love and venture of faith. He answered ' Come.' And in the power of that word, and of faith in Him who spoke it, Peter stepped down out of the boat and began to walk upon the water.

It was a noble act of faith. Yet here again the Apostle's natural character showed itself. He began well, but he soon failed. At sight of the dark heaving waves he began to fear, and fear begat mistrust. He looked away from Jesus, and began to sink. Then in his peril he cried, ' Lord, save me.' ' And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? '

Thus Peter was taught the lesson he so greatly needed —to distrust himself and his own ardent temperament. He did not yet know how weak and inconstant he was. So our

Lord allowed him to begin to sink, that he might learn that he could not be upheld by his own eagerness and warm affection, but only by divine power.

II. Our Venture of Faith

Our Lord welcomed and accepted Peter's venture of faith. He will welcome and accept ours.

There comes to us, it may be, a desire to draw nearer to Jesus, to follow Him more closely, to walk with Him in His mysterious, unearthly life, in a way beyond the power of nature. It may come in many ways—a call to make some great sacrifice, a deeper death to self and to the world; the vision of a life of union with our Lord closer and more intimate than we have yet known; a vocation perhaps to the religious life. We feel the mysterious attraction, and yet we shrink from it. Can such a life ever be mine? Is it not as far beyond me as if I were to dream of walking, like Peter, on the water? Can I, dare I, step down out of the ship of the natural life and walk this unearthly path upon the water?

If in any of these ways there comes to you in your retreat the desire to make some venture of faith, to draw in some way nearer to Christ, to embrace a life which you feel to be beyond the power of nature, be sure that Christ our Lord welcomes it, and says to you, as He said to Peter, 'Come.' 'Come and make the venture. Take the first step which will bring you nearer to Me, though it seems to you like abandoning the secure foothold of the ship to trust yourself upon the water. Fear not this; but rather fear to let the good desire I have put into your heart pass away without result. Be afraid of all hesitation and disobedience to the heavenly vision. It is I, your Saviour, calling you to walk by heavenly power in the sure way that will bring you to Myself, and to eternal life.'

III. The Need of Humility and Self-Distrust

The call of Jesus, in whatever form it comes to us, must always involve a trial of our faith. It is always a call to

something beyond our natural power. It would not be the call of God if it were not so. So there must be the trial of our faith. Sometimes the first steps are comparatively easy ; there is a sense of exhilaration and power attending upon them. Afterwards comes the difficulty of perseverance. Temptations beset us, or times of spiritual dryness. We lose heart and courage, and begin to sink. We had trusted in ourselves. We have to learn that such trust will always play us false—that our own strength, which seems so real in times of fervour, is utter weakness in times of temptation, if we look away from Jesus, and fail to trust in Him.

Distrust of self, and looking to Jesus—these are the safeguards of our perseverance. If we look away from Him and begin, like Peter, to sink, let us cry at once, ' Lord, save me ' ; and He will stretch forth His upholding hand, and with its strong grasp will come the reassuring voice, ' O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ? ' Not, 'Wherefore didst thou venture?' but having ventured and taken the first steps, ' Wherefore didst thou doubt ? I am not changed. I have not failed thee. If I gave thee power to take the first step, I can give thee power to take the next and the next. Doubt not, then, but look to Me. Believe that I am able to uphold thee all the way even to the end.'

Thus, then, meditate upon Jesus calling you to come to Him—calling you in that vision of Himself which He shows you, that desire He puts into your heart, that step onward He invites you to take, that resolution He inspires you to make, and which, perhaps, seems to you as far beyond your power to make or to keep as it would be to walk upon the water—calling you to make the venture of faith, to commit yourself wholly to Him, to leave all that hinders you, all half-hearted, halting service, all regrets and backward looks, all doubts and fears, and to take the path which will bring you most surely and most directly to Himself.

And in your prayer say to Him, ' Lord, if it be Thou—if this is indeed Thy will for me, then bid me come to Thee, however difficult, yea impossible, it seems to me. Bid me

leave all that seems to assure my position in the world, if only thereby I may come to Thee.'

And if in your heart you hear His voice say 'Come,' that 'Come' of Jesus, whatever it may call you to do, will give you power to walk in safety over all the waves of this troublesome world, till you come where He awaits you on the eternal shore.

Imitation of Christ, III. xxx, xxxiii, lix.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

This mystery stands in close relation to the Passion, and seems to have been intended to prepare the Apostles for it.

Prel. i. S. Matthew xvii. 1–8.

Prel. ii. The three Apostles with our Lord in the mountain—the darkness of the night, the brightness of the vision, as our Lord is transfigured in glory.

Prel. iii. Pray that beholding the glory of Christ in His Transfiguration, you may love Him more truly and follow Him more closely.

I. The Revelation of Glory

Our Lord took with Him Peter, James, and John, the same three who were afterwards to be with Him in Gethsemane, witnesses of His agony. He prepared them for this by showing them now something of His inherent glory, the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (*S. John* xvii. 5).

'He led them up into a high mountain, apart by themselves.' It is apart from the world, often in the solitude of retreat, that God reveals His glory. We must see that we really come apart in our retreat. And we must ascend the mountain with our Lord, ascend in heart and mind, by the labour of spiritual exercise and prayer.

It was while our Lord prayed that 'He was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.' It is through prayer that we are to undergo that transformation which our retreat is to work in us.

But this transformation is to take place not only in retreat. It is to begin there, but it is to go on afterwards in the ordinary routine of our daily life.

The glory which the Apostles beheld in our Lord was no extraneous brightness coming upon Him from without. It was the outshining of His own inherent glory, the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, but which was hidden during His earthly life.

So let us think how truly Christ is even now our life, though for the present it is a hidden life, waiting to be manifested when Christ shall come again in glory, and 'we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is' (*Col.* iii. 4; 1 *S. John* iii. 2). But meanwhile a secret process of transformation is to be going on, as day by day we put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new, and by Sacraments, and prayer, and obedience, Christ is being 'formed in us,' and we are 'changed into His image from glory to glory' (*Eph.* iv. 22, 24; *Gal.* iv. 19; 2 *Cor.* iii. 18).

Sometimes even now glimpses of this change are revealed to the outward eye, as the beauty of a soul manifests itself through the body. So it was said of Mr. Keble in his old age, that his face was like an illuminated clock, the colour and the gilding were gone, but the light of a beautiful soul shone forth from within.

So think of the necessity of living not to the flesh, but to the Spirit. These are the two influences between which we have to choose. Hereafter we must be wholly given up to the one or to the other, transfigured wholly into the likeness of Christ or into the likeness of Satan. Meanwhile all we do, even the thoughts we allow ourselves to think, and the tempers we cherish, are working to the one result or to the other.

> For of the soul the body form doth take,
> For soul is form, and doth the body make.

What a call and motive we have here to inward purity of heart and mind; since every thought and movement of the soul is fashioning now and for eternity not the soul alone, but the body also!

II. 'Lord, it is good for us to be here'

S. Peter would gladly have stayed in the mount. He hoped that this manifestation of glory might last. He had still to learn its real lesson, viz. that it was to prepare him and the other Apostles for the trials which lay before them, when they should see their Master taken captive, condemned, and crucified.

So we may think of the place of spiritual consolations in

our life. We must not cling to them inordinately. They are not intended to last. They are given for a time and for a purpose: then they pass away. But the fruit of them is to remain. They are meant to strengthen us for times of trial and temptation. 'They are like the refreshment given to a traveller at an inn. They are not given to induce him to stay, but to enable him to continue his journey with fresh strength and courage' (*Father Balthasar Alvarez*).

'Lord, it is good for us to be here.' That is what we are apt to say in times of spiritual consolation. We think how good it would be if it were always to be like this, when prayer is easy and temptation absent. We wish it could be always so, and sometimes we think it is going to be always so. But no; it cannot be. It is good for a time, but not for a permanence. We are not to build our dwelling place here. The end is not yet. Our Lord will call us to follow Him in the way of His Passion and the holy Cross.

III. The Passing of the Vision

A cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of it: 'This is My beloved Son; hear Him.'

We are to listen not to our own faint hearts with their natural longing for consolation, but to Christ. And what is it that He says? He tells of His Passion. That was what He spoke of with Moses and Elias during the vision (*S. Luke* ix. 31), and He returned to the same subject with His disciples when they came down from the mountain. But they did not understand (*S. Mark* ix. 31, 32). Let it not be so with us. Let us understand that it is only in the way of the Cross that we can follow Jesus and partake of His triumph.

The disciples feared as they heard the voice speaking to them from out of the cloud. But Jesus came to them and touched them and said, 'Arise, and be not afraid' (*S. Matt.* xvii. 7). So, as the voice of God speaks in our hearts it may be that we fear and shrink from its demands, till Jesus comes and touches us with the interior touch of His grace, and says to us, 'Fear not. Arise with a generous and resolute will, even though the Cross be heavy, and leads at last to Calvary.'

'And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.' The bright vision had passed. Now they must return to their ordinary life, and the Passion lies before them.

So with us. During these days we have been with our Lord in the holy mount, apart from the world, allowed to see something of His glory. Soon we must go back to our ordinary life. The vision will have passed, but its fruit is to remain in the holy lessons we have learned and the good resolutions God inspires us to make. We need not fear, Jesus will be with us still. He is the same whether transfigured in glory or seen in the weakness of our mortal nature. He is not less our Lord and Saviour, the Son of the living God, in the one condition than in the other. Let us pray that our eyes may be opened to behold the reality of His presence with us, in whatever way He shows it, in glory or in suffering. Let us learn the lesson which S. Peter and his fellow Apostles were meant to learn when they were with our Lord in the holy mountain (2 *S. Pet.* i. 18).

O Lord Jesus, grant us so to contemplate the hidden glory of Thy presence within us, that we may be transfigured into Thy likeness, and strengthened to follow Thee in the way of the Cross, in whatever manner Thou mayest call us to bear it.

Imitation of Christ, II. x ; III. vii.

LAZARUS

PREL. i. S. John xi. 1–54 ; xii. 1, 9–11.

Prel. ii. The strange figure of Lazarus, bearing witness to the reality of the life beyond the grave.

Prel iii. Pray that like him you may be dead to the world, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I. THE NAME OF LAZARUS

The name ' Lazarus,' a shortened form of Eleazar, means ' God is my Helper.' Truly this name betokened the mighty work of power wrought upon Lazarus when Jesus called him back from his four days' sojourn in the spirit world. Yet he could not know the full meaning of this name till he had first experienced the helplessness of sickness and death. Before he can know God truly as his Helper, he must know that there is no help in any other.

Our Lord loved Lazarus and his sisters, yet He suffered this trouble to come upon them. He might, had He so willed, have come to their help at once ; but when He heard that Lazarus was sick, ' He abode two days still in the same place where He was.' He waited till Lazarus was dead. This family whom Jesus loved must experience the extremity of helplessness before they could know the help of God. The leprosy of Simon, the demoniacal possessions of Mary, and now the death of Lazarus, mark this family as being a very special object of supernatural intervention both for good and for evil. Indeed Satan chiefly busies himself to overthrow those in this world who are the special friends of Jesus. We must never be surprised to find great trials, bodily, mental, and spiritual, coming upon those who are called especially near to Jesus. It is no token that Jesus does not love us that we seem to be abandoned by Him. Those whom Jesus loves must experience His absence as truly as His presence. They must know ' the dark night of the soul ' as well as the bright vision of Mount Tabor. They must feel how helpless nature is to rise to the supernatural life of grace. Only the voice of Jesus can work

that miracle of resurrection. We shall know how truly God is our Helper when we have first learnt our own utter helplessness.

Meditate thus on the name of Lazarus, and what it may teach us of the helplessness of nature, and the all-sufficiency of the grace of Christ.

II. His Experience

Lazarus could never again be as other men. The mystery of his return from the grave marked him out as separated from them more clearly than the grave-clothes, which tradition says he ever afterwards wore.

Think of the experience through which he had passed. He had known what it was to die and pass into the spirit world. Like another Lazarus (*S. Luke* xvi. 19–26), he had been 'in Abraham's bosom,' had spoken with patriarchs and prophets of old, and from that abode of peace had seen the great dividing gulf and the place of torment beyond. How this must have brought home to him in vivid consciousness the littleness, the unreality, the danger, of earthly things: the solemn reality of the life beyond the grave! Browning has portrayed this for us in his poem, *An Epistle of Karshish, the Arab Physician*, who, on his travels, has met with Lazarus and writes to his old master concerning his strange case.

> He holds on firmly to some thread of life—
> Which runs across some vast distracting orb
> Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
> Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—
> The spiritual life around the earthly life:
> The law of that is known to him as this,
> His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.[1]

No words of his are recorded. Tradition says he lived again for thirty years. We know no more. He walks this earth as one belonging to another world. That other is for him the only real world. This world is but a transitory show, yet fraught with issues overwhelming in their greatness.

[1] *Poetical Works*, vol. iv, p. 193, ed. 1888.

What should we be if, like him, we had come back from the spirit world? What ought we to be, who have been raised out of a much more terrible state of death than he? The consciousness of our baptism, separating us from the world, ought to be ever present with us; at least it should be the background of all our consciousness. The grave of Lazarus was a place of corruption; we are buried with Christ who saw no corruption (*Rom.* vi. 4; *Acts* ii. 31; xiii. 37). The grave of Christ wherein we are buried with Him is not a place where life is extinguished, but wherein it is renewed, transformed, glorified.

How must we praise God for this miracle that has been wrought upon us! Lazarus wore continually his grave-clothes. We must wear continually the joyous robe of Christ's righteousness, separating us from the world even as the grave-clothes separated him. Only in proportion as we feel our separation can we experience the new life we have in Christ.

III. His Witness to another Life

Many of the Jews came out to Bethany that they might see Lazarus. They came urged by curiosity and full of excitement. How different was the calm of Lazarus. He was calm because of the depth of his consciousness. He had a deeper knowledge of Jesus than those around him could share. He felt his own absolute nothingness beside the Saviour who had brought him back from the grave; and in that consciousness his soul was bowed in worship, while his whole outward bearing testified to the solemn reality of that unseen world from which he had returned.

So should it be with us. Our separation from the world, our consciousness of what Jesus has done for us, will speak more powerfully than any words. What preacher has ever spoken to men's hearts so powerfully as the silent form of him whom Jesus loved and had restored from death, living on amid the old surroundings, yet so separated from them by the great experience through which he had passed!

Oh, if we did but realize, as we ought, the greatness of the love of Jesus in raising us from the death of sin, how powerful would be our witness to the world! The soul

that is conscious of this miracle of regeneration ought indeed to be the means of bringing many others to believe in Christ. 'I will tell you what He hath done for my soul' (*Ps.* lxvi. 14).

But alas! there is another side. If Lazarus wakens the faith of some, he drives others to fierce hatred. 'The chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus also to death, because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus' (*S. John* xii. 10, 11). The soul that is raised to supernatural life by Jesus is an object of hatred to those who want to rest in the natural life. We must not, then, be surprised if the life of Christ in us stirs up the hatred and antagonism of the world. 'Marvel not, My brethren, if the world hate you.' 'If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you' (1 *S. John* iii. 13; *S. John* xv. 19). Alas, for the world; but oh, the joy to suffer hatred and reproach for Christ! That, more than all else, brings home to the faithful soul the consciousness of His love.

O Lord Jesus Christ, grant that I may always bear witness to the miracle of grace whereby Thou hast called me from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; and, after the example of Thy holy Apostles, may rejoice to suffer shame and persecution for the glory of Thy Name.

Imitation of Christ, II. vii; III. iv.

OUR LORD'S DESIRE FOR THE CROSS

'In the third Week the election of a more perfect life,' or of whatever resolution we have been led to make in our retreat, 'is established and confirmed by the consideration of the great and wonderful example of the Passion of our Lord and Saviour. For in the Passion all His virtues shine out far more conspicuously and gloriously, and more powerfully invite us to imitate Him' (*Directory* xxxv. i).

Prel i. S. Mark x. 32–34.

Prel. ii. Our Lord goes before His disciples. His eager gait reflects the desire of His soul, hastening towards His Passion. They follow in amazement and fear.

Prel. iii. Pray for an interior knowledge of our Lord, as for us He goes to His Passion; in order that you may love Him better and follow Him more closely.

I. Our Lord's Desire for the Cross

It is difficult for us to realize what the Cross meant to one in our Lord's time. We have glorified it and made it a thing of beauty. We set it up upon our churches and our altars. We use it as an ornament. But once it was the bare rough wood, the instrument of torture and of shame, all its associations only such as belonged to the execution of a common criminal.

Yet our Lord desired it. The thought of it was ever before His mind. That is no misleading picture with which Overbeck has made us familiar, of the boy Christ on the Cross, with the thrilling legend beneath, *Dolor meus in conspectu meo semper* (*Ps.* xxxvii. 18, Vulg.). In the earliest days of His ministry He had spoken to Nicodemus of the lifting up of the Son of Man, as the serpent was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness (*S. John* iii. 14). Again, in S. Matthew x. 38, 'He that taketh not his cross, and followeth Me, is not worthy of Me.' But more frequently and explicitly after S. Peter's great confession: 'From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer' (*S. Matt.*

xvi. 21). And again, after His Transfiguration, on a journey through Galilee with His disciples, He taught them of His Passion (*S. Mark* ix. 30, 31).

So now on the way to Jerusalem for the final Passover, and at the Last Supper, He repeats this teaching, 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer' (*S. Luke* xxii. 15). It is like an echo of those earlier words, 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!' (*S. Luke* xii. 50).

All this witnesses to our Lord's constant thought of the Cross, and to His desire to suffer.

II. Reasons why He desired the Cross

1. *The glory of God.* The Cross was to be the instrument of victory over Satan. This was the great purpose for which our Lord came into the world, 'that He might destroy the works of the devil' (1 *S. John* iii. 8). He came to do battle with the great rebel, and win back the world to loyalty and love to His Father. He met Satan in the wilderness, and overcame him there. Satan was repulsed and departed from Him, but only 'for a season' (*S. Luke* iv. 13). The final battle and the complete victory was in Gethsemane and upon the Cross. There Satan exerted against Him all his power. As in the wilderness he had tempted Him by every form of seduction addressed to body, mind, and spirit; so in the Garden and on the Cross he tried to shake His constancy by every form of suffering bodily, mental, and spiritual. But in vain. The perfect obedience of the Son of God in our nature was the final victory over Satan, and at the same time a perfect satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Here was man as God meant him to be, and God was satisfied in Him. It was a complete reparation, and the heart of Jesus was consumed with the desire to make it.

2. *The Cross was to be the instrument of our salvation.* By the Cross He broke the power of Satan, and delivered us from captivity to him. By the Cross He would deliver us from the power of sin, and bring us back to the love and service of God. By the Cross He would win for us both

pardon and grace. By the Blood of His Cross He would blot out our sins, but also by His Blood He would impart to us new life. This life He could impart to us only when He had Himself passed victoriously through death: 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit' (*S. John* xii. 24). Thus our Lord reveals the necessity of His death for the extension of the divine life which He came to bring us.

So He desired the Cross because of its fruitfulness. As He looked on into the future, He saw the fruit of His Passion in penitents and in saints, in all who should overcome themselves and the world, in all holy vocations, in all mission work, in the great multitude standing at last 'before the throne, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands' (*Rev.* vii. 9). And with such a vision before Him, He said, 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished'; for 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me' (*S. Luke* xii. 50; *S. John* xii. 32).

III. Our Participation in the Cross

Our Lord spoke to His disciples frequently about the Cross, training them by degrees to bear the thought of it. And He taught them that they must in some way share it. They too must take up the Cross, if they would follow Him. They too must drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism. The servant must be as His Master. 'If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you' (*S. John* xv. 20; xv. 18–20; *S. Matt.* x. 16–18, 22–25).

So with ourselves. Our Lord suffered not merely instead of us, but to win for us grace to suffer along with Him, and in so doing to lay hold upon the Divine life which is in Him. His suffering has not removed the necessity of our suffering, any more than His temptation has removed the necessity of our being tempted. In both cases, in the wilderness and on the Cross, the suffering and the temptation were to develop in Himself those energies of grace which should strengthen us to follow in His steps.

Therefore our Lord desires to inspire us with a love of

the Cross, because it is by the Cross that we are to share His victory. It is by the Cross that we are to overcome Satan, the world, and ourselves. It is by the Cross that we are to present ourselves a sacrifice to God. It is by the Cross that we are to enter into the experience of the true Life which is in Him. 'If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him' (2 *Tim.* ii. 11). 'Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our body' (2 *Cor.* iv. 10). 'That I may know Him and the power of His Resurrection . . . being made conformable unto His death' (*Phil.* iii. 10). Bearing the Cross develops the life of Christ within us. It would be of no use to have received the Divine life if we do not live in its power, and that power is manifested and developed in enabling us to bear the Cross.

Let us not then refuse the Cross or fear to die upon it. Out of that death to ourselves and to the world will come the growing realization of the mystery and power of the new life, the risen life of Christ within us. We shall come to 'know Him, and the power of His Resurrection' (*Phil.* iii. 10), as we can know it in no other way.

Imitation of Christ, II. xi.

GETHSEMANE

PREL. i. S. Matthew xxvi. 36–46.

Prel. ii. Contemplate our Lord among the olive trees prostrate on the earth, ' sore amazed and very heavy.' See the great drops of blood standing out upon His forehead and falling to the ground.

Prel. iii. Pray for sorrow with Christ in His sorrow, and pray also that in all times of inward trial and desolation of heart you may have grace to persevere in prayer.

I. GETHSEMANE

Think of the immense sufferings of our Lord. They are beyond all that we can imagine. The mind has greater capacity for suffering than the body, and the spirit than the mind. Who can say what the mind, and heart, and spirit of Jesus suffered during His Passion, and in concentrated form in the garden of Gethsemane? Much of it must always remain to swell the vast burden of those ' unknown sufferings ' which the Eastern Church pleads in one of her litanies. But we may infer something of them from the change which came over our Lord as He enters upon His Passion.

Hitherto, throughout His life, He has shown Himself so calm, so strong, so superior to outward circumstances. Now He begins to be ' amazed ' and ' very heavy,' His soul is ' exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' He is in ' an agony,' and ' His sweat as it were great drops of blood.'

He seeks solitude, and then returns to His disciples as if looking for their sympathy. But they are asleep, and have no help to give.

He returns again to His solitary prayer. Alone, without human aid, in desolation of soul, He endures in the conflict of His prayer till it becomes ' an agony.'

Are there any sufferings we know of comparable to those inward desolations of spirit when God seems to hide His face from us, and the soul sinks into ' a horror of great darkness ' (*Gen.* xv. 12)? What, then, must it have been

to our Lord, whose normal state was not, as ours, to be visited only from time to time with spiritual consolations, but to be always ' in heaven ' (*S. John* iii. 13), one with the Father in the uncreated joy of the Holy Ghost ?

It is not feebleness which has brought upon Him this sense of desolation. As the Captain of our salvation He has come to conquer the great rebel ; but the victory of redemption can be no mere exercise of divine power crushing the foe. He must feel the reality of the bondage of sin under which Satan holds mankind. He must truly feel our penalty because He truly shares our nature. In the fullness of His sympathy He has a vital consciousness of the sins of every individual of the human race, a sorrow ' unto death ' for each and all.

O Lord, let me so meditate upon Thy sufferings, that I may learn to suffer with Thee. If I am not called to share Thy outward sufferings, at least let me gaze upon the sorrows of Thy Heart. Thy sacred Heart is indeed a school wherein I shall learn to sorrow for sin with a sorrow which shall be worthy of Thy love.

II. The Ingredients of the Cup

What these were we can only partly know.

1. There was the horror of death, so strange a thing to Him who was the Author and the Lord of life.

2. The sense of loneliness and desertion in the knowledge that His disciples would so soon forsake Him and flee.

3. The natural shrinking from all the suffering and shame which was to fill up the last hours of His earthly life.

4. The weight and burden of the sins of the whole world, past, present, and future, ' The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all ' (*Isa.* liii. 6).

5. The added sorrow that for many these vast, unfathomable sorrows would be in vain.

6. The power of Satan, seeking so to crush His Spirit under the weight of all this suffering, as to shake His constancy, and deter Him from drinking the cup which His

Father gave Him to drink, and by drinking which alone He could redeem and save us.

> Deep waters have come in, O Lord !
> All darkly on Thy human soul ;
> And clouds of supernatural gloom
> Around Thee are allowed to roll.

Yes, added to all else that might make the bitterness of the cup were these ' clouds of supernatural gloom,' the oppressive power of the prince of darkness. And though our Lord's human will never swerved from the obedient and willing acceptance of all that our ransom and redemption required, we see in the prostration of His body on the earth, and the distress of His soul, how great and real was the agony of the struggle.

III. Some Lessons for Ourselves

Our Lord teaches us how to bear spiritual trials—those times of darkness, depression, desolation of heart and soul, when it seems impossible to pray and we are tempted to give up in despair. In all such times of trial let us contemplate our Lord in Gethsemane and learn of Him not to complain, but to be silent, to pray, to trust in God.

1. *To be silent* ; to keep our sufferings to ourselves, not to complain or speak of them except to God. What is the use of speaking of them to others ? After a few moments of relief the burden returns, and is harder to bear, because we have weakened ourselves by complaining. A cross which we have courage to bear in silence is the source of many blessings. It strengthens the soul and wins much grace.

2. *To pray*. Jesus continued in prayer in spite of weariness and desolation of spirit. Let us learn from Him to persevere in prayer through all times of dryness, desolation, and temptation. In the grace of His Passion we shall find strength to resist the weakness of the flesh, the weariness of the mind, and the oppression of the devil. Let us not shorten our prayer, but rather, as S. Ignatius advises, prolong it for a little while, so as ' not only to resist the enemy, but even to overthrow him ' (*Ex. Sp.* Annot. xiii).

(*a*) *Jesus prayed with resignation,* bending His human will to the Divine will, and holding it there in union till His prayer issued in triumphant acceptance of the Cross. 'Not as I will, but as Thou wilt.'

(*b*) *Jesus prayed, 'saying the same words.'* How short and simple were His acts of prayer! How directly they went to the root of the matter, expressing His need! How often we feel that we know not how to pray! It is because our idea of prayer is so mistaken. We think that we must bring to God many words and lofty thoughts. No; let us only feel our need, and not be afraid to repeat again and again the same simple words in brief acts and petitions. That will be to pray as our Lord prayed.

(*c*) *Jesus was strengthened by an angel from heaven.* Strengthened, not delivered. The angel did not remove the burden which weighed upon Him, but strengthened Him to endure it to the end. God does not always answer our prayer by removing our burden, or changing our desolation into consolation. Often the answer is like that to S. Paul, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness' (2 *Cor.* xii. 9).

3. *To trust.* As we contemplate Jesus let us learn to accept the trial of our faith and patience, and to trust in God though our prayer seems to be unanswered. The answer is sure, if we persevere. God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will with the temptation make also the way to escape, that we may be able to endure it (1 *Cor.* x. 13).

O Lord Jesus, who in the Garden didst persevere in Thy prayer till the victory was won; grant that in all trials and temptations I may have recourse to Thee in prayer, and, resigning myself wholly to Thy will, may endure to the end; to the glory of Thy grace, who with the Father and the Holy Ghost livest and reignest one God, for ever and ever.

Imitation of Christ, III. xxix, xxx, 1.

CALVARY

PREL. i. S. Luke xxiii. 33–46.

Prel. ii. Place yourself at the foot of the Cross and recall the words of the Apostle, 'Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps' (1 *S. Pet.* ii. 21).

Prel. iii. Pray for grace to take up the Cross in whatever form it may be laid upon you, and to bear it after Christ with a thankful and courageous will.

I. THE PERSONS

Who and what is He who suffers? It is Jesus Christ, God and Man, 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (*Col.* ii. 3). Here, then, is for me the true wisdom and knowledge, to contemplate the Cross, and to suffer for Jesus. To the world the Cross is foolishness, but for me henceforth my only wisdom shall be to know 'Jesus Christ and Him crucified' (1 *Cor.* ii. 2).

Here, too, is for me the way to the highest sanctity. By suffering Christ sanctified Himself, that I too might be sanctified in truth (*S. John* xvii. 19). To the world suffering is weakness and shame, but for me, the disciple of Jesus Christ, it shall be power and glory. 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world' (*Gal.* vi. 14). 'Behold! in the Cross all doth consist, and all lieth in our dying thereon; for there is no other way unto life, and unto true inward peace, but the way of the holy Cross, and of daily mortification' (*Imitation of Christ*, II. xii. 3).

II. THE WORDS

Listen to the jeers, the insults, the blasphemies, of the crowd. There is no word of compassion or of consolation for Jesus. And He is silent; or, if He speaks, it is in words of love, and heavenly wisdom. 'Father, forgive them; for

they know not what they do' (*S. Luke* xxiii. 34). This and the two following words spoken from the Cross reveal to us the sacred Heart going forth in ministries of love, which were the commencement of ministrations to be perpetuated in the power of the Spirit through all future time: the ministry of intercession through which sinners are forgiven; the opening of Paradise to the penitent; the binding of the bonds of human life in the new relationship of supernatural love.

Then, when these laws of love have been revealed, our Lord shows us something of the inward conflict of His soul, bearing the sin of the world and surrendering Himself to the final consummation of His Sacrifice, the great atonement for our sins. 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' This was the great crisis of the Passion, in which our Lord submitted to be bereft of the conscious support of His Godhead in His desire to unite Himself most perfectly with us in our lost and ruined state.

After this came three more words: 'I thirst,' telling us not only of His bodily thirst, but of His thirst for God and for the salvation of souls. Then the triumphant cry, 'It is finished,' rejoicing as one about to enter into rest after long and painful toil. And last, the calm peace of perfect love and trust, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.'

Meditate upon these seven words, or some of them, as you may be led by the Holy Spirit, and learn what our Lord says by them to you at this stage of your retreat.

III. The Actions

Here, on the Cross, was fought out to a finish the battle with Satan, the prince of this world and of death. By His death our Lord destroyed 'him that had the power of death, that is, the devil' (*Heb.* ii. 14), and freed us from his tyranny. But the condition of our continuing freedom is that we should die along with Christ. This is the deepest lesson of the Cross, which, if it be truly learnt, causes all other lessons to be comparatively easy—death to the world, death to sin, death to self. And it is this death to self to which our Lord especially calls us, for the world and sin act upon us only

through the self. And even when the world is overcome, self may still be master.

Let me, then, bring my old self to the Cross that, identifying myself with the spirit of the Crucified, I may pass through death to newness of life in Him.

IV. Further Points

Besides these three points which are common to all the contemplations on our Lord's life, S. Ignatius, for the Passion, adds three further points.

1. I am 'to consider what Christ our Lord suffers in His humanity, or wills to suffer.' Here I will meditate upon (1) the voluntary character of our Lord's sufferings. *Oblatus est, quia ipse voluit* (*Isa.* liii. 7, Vulgate). He suffered not merely with resignation, but with joy as He looked through suffering to the glory of the Father, the salvation of the world, and the glory that should be His reward (*Heb.* xii. 2); and (2) their redemptive value, due to His twofold nature. Had He been a mere man His patience in suffering might have been for us an example, that we should follow His steps; but an example so far beyond us that we might have despaired. But because He is God as well as Man, He is not only a perfect example, but also a source of grace enabling us to follow Him, while at the same time His sufferings have a redemptive value for our pardon and salvation. 'He was wounded for our transgressions . . . the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed' (*Isa.* liii. 5).

2. I am to consider also 'how the Divinity hides Itself, that is to say, how He was able to destroy His enemies, and does not do so; and how He allows His most holy humanity to suffer so cruelly.' He could have destroyed His enemies with a word (*S. John* xviii. 6), or called legions of angels to His side (*S. Matt.* xxvi. 53), or of His own will have come down from the Cross, but He did not do so. Thus, while I think of the voluntary character of His sufferings, I will remember again the third Mode of Humility, and ask that I may have grace to choose by preference poverty, humilia-

tions, and the Cross, solely out of love for Christ and the desire to imitate Him as closely as possible, even if I could give equal glory to God at less cost to myself.

3. I will bring all this home to myself, thinking of my own share in His Passion, considering how He bore my sins in His own body on the tree (1 *S. Pet.* ii. 24), and made there for them a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, while He thought of me and prayed for me with a special individual love (*Gal.* ii. 20). So I will think how His wondrous Passion was all for *me*, to atone for *my* sins, to give *me* hope and courage and strength and new life, to waken *my* heart to love and thanksgiving, to open *my* eyes to the worth of a soul, to kindle in *me* a zeal for the salvation of others.

With such thoughts in my mind and affections in my heart, I will ask myself what I in turn ought, not only to *do*, but also to *suffer* for Christ. All my contemplation of the Passion will be barren, unless it bears fruit in the desire and resolution to do and to suffer something for Christ, who has done and suffered so much for me. Why should I fear ' to take up the Cross which leads to the kingdom ? In the Cross is salvation, in the Cross is life, in the Cross is protection against our enemies, in the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the Cross is strength of mind, in the Cross is joy of spirit, in the Cross the height of virtue, in the Cross the perfection of sanctity. . . . Take up, therefore, thy cross and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting ' (*Imitation of Christ*, II. xii. 2).

Imitation of Christ, II. xi, xii.

THE ATTRACTIVE POWER OF THE PASSION

PREL. i. S. Luke xxiii. 47–49.

Prel. ii. Contemplate the Cross. The crowds have gone away. Jesus hangs there in the stillness of death. Remember His words, ' I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me ' (*S. John* xii. 32).

Prel. iii. Pray that you may feel the attractive power of the Cross, and yield yourself to it.

I. THE PASSION A CONTINUING FACT

' It is finished.' The last pang has been borne, the last sorrow endured. All is over. There is a calm and hush after the tempest. It is over ; and yet in another, and a true sense, it is only beginning. The Passion has become an eternal fact. Its virtue reaches on through all time. The fountain for sin begins to flow. The kingdom of heaven is opened to all believers. How many millions since then have been drawn to the Cross, and have found salvation there !

Yes, Calvary was but the beginning. The Passion of Jesus lives on in the sufferings of His mystical Body. He is the Head, His mystical Body must have its passion too. We must ' fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ for His Body's sake, which is the Church ' (*Col.* i. 24). Not of course that the sufferings of Christ lacked anything of atoning power, or that our sufferings have any atoning merit ; but Christ's mystical Body grows to its perfection by the sufferings of His members in successive generations. In His Passion our Lord offered Himself to the Father, that we might offer ourselves to God through Him ; that each act of our obedience, or self-denial, each suffering borne in union with Him, might become a means of our sanctification, and that of the whole Church.

Therefore when the Cross is laid upon thyself, in whatever

way, heavy toil, disappointment, failure, misapprehension, scorn, surrender of home, poverty embraced for His sake, hardships, dangers, spiritual trials—see what all these become; what a light and heavenly glow they gather from the Cross of Jesus! By His offering He sanctified Himself, that we also, by the Cross, might be sanctified along with Him. The Cross of Jesus is the initiatory act of a moral and spiritual sacrifice the fruit of which will not be consummated till He comes again in glory.

II. Its Austere Demands and Healing Virtue

As we contemplate the Cross of Jesus, see what a demand it makes upon us!

What did He not give up for us? The bliss of heaven, the glory He had with the Father before the world was (*S. John* xvii. 5). Out of this glory He stepped down into our dark, sin-stricken world. 'The Word became flesh,' was made 'in the likeness of sinful flesh,' 'took upon Him the form of a servant' (*S. John* i. 14; *Rom.* viii. 3; *Phil.* ii. 7).

And having thus come down from heaven, what did He not give up for us even in His earthly life? His home at Nazareth and His blessed Mother that He might go to meet the tempter in the wilderness, in the weakness of His long fast; and thence to the toils of His ministry, to hunger, thirst, weariness, the contradiction of sinners, often with nowhere to lay His head, spending whole nights in prayer upon the hills, and at last to the accumulated sufferings of the Passion.

Behold Him naked on the Cross, stripped of everything; and ask Him to draw you to Himself that you may be ready, at His call, to give up luxuries and comforts which make life smooth and pleasant; ready for His sake to be poor, at least poor in spirit; to surrender, if need be, home, friends, society, intercourse with the educated and congenial; to meet, it may be, sickness, the wearing out of bodily strength, a premature death, in some laborious work at home or in the mission field.

Or, harder still, if He should call you to bear, for His sake, slander and misrepresentation, to have friends turn against you, to endure persecution; or to suffer spiritual trials,

loss of comfort in prayer, loss of the sense of His presence in Communion.

Nature, indeed, shrinks from demands such as these. But as we contemplate the Cross they lose their terror, and we begin to see them in another light. We learn that it is not in hours of earthly happiness and prosperity, not when things go smoothly and all men speak well of us, not even always in times of spiritual consolation, that we are brought nearest to Christ; but in hours when the heart droops, in days of loneliness and sorrow, when the world looks coldly on us, and God Himself seems to fail us—then it is that the Cross shines out with a new beauty and power, and we learn the secret of its strengthening and its healing virtue.

III. Its Attractive Power

Nature may shrink. But as we contemplate the Passion of Jesus, the Cross takes on another aspect. It is seen to be a triumph. On the Cross our Lord conquers death and Satan. On the Cross He triumphs over pain of body and anguish of soul. On the Cross He reigns as King, appealing to our allegiance and devotion. On the Cross He displays the beauty of holiness, and the consummation of love. And sometimes the soul is so inflamed by the vision that it would desire to suffer simply out of love to Him and in order to be more like Him.[1]

Thus it is that the attractive power of the Cross has wrought through all ages of the Church. It has inspired men and women to follow Christ in His Passion. It has drawn them to the religious life. It has impelled them to leave home, and family, and friends; to go out into the dark places of the world; to work in city slums and foreign missions, in burning heat and icy cold, in poverty and loneliness, in weariness and failing health. It has sustained them through all their difficulties and trials. It has made them joyful in all their tribulations, and inspired them with the endurance of confessors and the fortitude of martyrs.

Meditate thus upon the attractive power of the Passion. The Cross is the magnet of souls. But a magnet does not attract everything; only that which is akin to it. So the

[1] See the Third Mode of Humility, p. 79.

Cross attracts only generous souls that have the capacity for being perfected by suffering. Let me pray that I may be among such souls, so that, drawn by the power of the Cross into the fellowship of Christ's Passion, I may taste, as is possible in no other way, the strength and sweetness of His love.

Yet, while I desire to pray such a prayer, I seem to hear, O Lord, Thy questioning voice, 'Art thou able to drink of the cup that I drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? (*S. Mark* x. 38). Canst thou bear to be crucified along with Me? Art thou bearing patiently even the little crosses of thy present life?'

O Lord, I know not. I dare not answer for myself. This only I know, that I owe myself and all to Thee. I am not my own. I am bought with the price of Thy Blood. One thing only I dare to answer for, as the vision of Thy Cross comes before me. Whatever be my past sins, my present weakness and instability, as I kneel here with my heart open to Thee, Thou knowest, Lord, that I love Thee.

Imitation of Christ, II. xii; III, lvii; IV. viii.

THE CALMNESS OF THE RESURRECTION

PREL. i. S. Mark xvi. 1–6.

Prel. ii. Contemplate the rising sun, the stone rolled away by the earthquake, the empty sepulchre, the grave-clothes lying undisturbed, the angels keeping their reverent watch where the body of Jesus had lain.

Prel. iii. Pray that you may experience the peace and joy of the risen life, which Christ calls us even now to share (*S. John* xvi. 20 ; xx. 27).

I. THE CALMNESS OF OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION

1. *The calmness of the sacred body resting in the tomb.* As we gaze upon the face of a friend just dead we are conscious of a certain mystery of calmness. Yet in that silent form decay is going on, the beauty of that calmness will not last. But the body of Jesus saw no corruption. In death it was still united to His divine Person. It possessed an inherent life which no power of death could touch.

2. *The calmness of His soul in Hades.* He has overcome death and Satan, but His soul is not fluttered or elated as by any earthly victory. There is no excitement in His triumph, for there was never any doubt of the issue.

3. *The calmness of the souls of the faithful as they gather round Him.* There is no struggle, no need to exercise force to rescue them from the prison house. Death could no more hold them than it could hold our Lord.

4. *The calmness of His body and soul in their joyous reunion.* The grave-clothes are left undisturbed, just fallen flat (κείμενα), while His body passes out of them as a spirit might. The stone, the seal, the sleeping sentinels are all left undisturbed ; while the body they were set to guard is gone. The earthquake, which came later, only showed that the tomb was empty.

5. *The calmness of the whole mystery.* It was ' very early in the morning . . . at the rising of the sun.' The sunrise

is a type of its exceeding calm. Silently the sun's light fills the sky and darkness flees away. So in calmness and silence the Sun of Righteousness rises, filling earth with the brightness of His presence.

How unlike the world is all this! Here is the greatest victory ever won, yet how calm and secret is His triumph! Silent and unseen He who 'was dead' comes forth from the grave, and is 'alive for evermore,' and has 'the keys of hell and death' (*Rev.* i. 18). Here is the beginning of 'a new creation.' In His resurrection 'old things are passed away; behold, they are become new,' and the world knows nothing of it (2 *Cor.* v. 17).

II. The Calmness in which the Risen Lord lives

The calm and peace of His appearances during the great forty days.

1. *To Mary Magdalene*: with no sudden shock, but calmly, gradually. 'Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?' Then, in the old familiar voice, her name, 'Mary'; and she recognizes Him and clasps His feet (*S. John* xx. 11–16).

2. *To the two disciples on the way to Emmaus.* Quietly, as a stranger, He overtakes them and walks with them, making their hearts burn within them, while He explains the Scriptures to them. Then, at the journey's end, as He sits at meat with them, He takes bread, blesses, breaks, and gives it to them, and their eyes are opened, and they know Him, and He vanishes out of their sight (*S. Luke* xxiv. 13–32).

3. *To the assembled disciples at Jerusalem.* Calmly, without sound or motion, He is in the midst of them, quieting their fears, speaking peace to their hearts: 'Peace be unto you.' 'Why are ye troubled? . . . Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.' And again the next Sunday evening, when Thomas is with them, the same calm appearing, the same greeting of peace, and quieting the Apostle's doubts, 'Reach hither thy finger, and

behold My hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side : and become not faithless, but believing' (*S. John* xx. 19–29).

So, through all the forty days, there is the same atmosphere of calm and peace. He manifests Himself only to a few, for brief interviews, in retired spots, coming they knew not whence and then as mysteriously vanishing again, till at last, on the Mount of Olives, He withdraws finally in the mystery of the Ascension.

What a revelation is all this of the calmness of God, the calmness of divine peace and joy !

There had always been a calmness about our Lord, but it was not so plain while He was exposed to the accidents of this lower world. But now His sacred humanity has passed into the peace of God. Dead to the world it lives with a higher order of life ; in the world but not of it ; steeped in unutterable peace and joy, the tranquil, unchanging peace and joy of God (*S. John* xv. 11 ; xvii. 13).

It is also a calmness of almighty power. Real strength is always calm. How calm and silent are the great forces of nature, gravitation, the ebb and flow of the tides, the growth of plants. What, then, must be the calmness of the infinite, resistless, might of God, the ultimate source of these and all other forces ! And now the sacred humanity of Jesus is exalted to be the instrument of this almighty power : 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth' (*S. Matt.* xxviii. 18).

III. The Calmness of the Risen Life in which we are Called to Live with Christ

The risen life of Christ is our true life. In our baptism we were buried with Him that we might live in the power of His resurrection. Every Christian, and most certainly every priest, is called to live :—

1. In the calmness and freedom of a life detached from earthly things. The risen Lord walked amid material things in the freedom of a spiritual nature, unaffected by the things of time and change. How easily we are carried off our balance by earthly excitement, hopes, and fears !

How much more calm and indifferent to outward things we should be, if we were living more truly in the power of Christ's risen life !

2. In the calmness of the joy of Jesus. The joy of earth is restless, unstable, insecure ; the joy of the risen Lord is a calm, unchanging joy, that never fails. This joy He will give to those who abide in Him.

3. In the calmness of His strength we are to do our work ; in the strength of His victory to encounter the world and the devil. 'In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world' (*S. John* xvi. 33).

Let us seek to enter into this calmness of the risen life, acting and speaking without hurry or excitement, checking natural impetuosity, content to be hidden and unknown, in the consciousness of a secret life, not nourished by earthly things nor dependent on them.

Yet we must be patient if our spiritual growth is slow. Think again of the sunrise. How gradual is the increase of the light ! Imperceptibly it illuminates one object after another, till all is clear. So the Day Star will arise in our hearts (2 *S. Pet.* i. 19 ; 2 *Cor.* iv. 6), and little by little we shall come to see more clearly the things of the Spirit, and find that we have really grown.

Meditate thus upon the calmness of the risen life. Into this calmness we are being drawn day by day, by sacraments, by prayer, by the ordered discipline of our life, by the silent ebbing away of time, and by the approach of death.

Imitation of Christ, III. xlvii–xlix.

JOY IN THE SIGHT OF THE RISEN LORD

PREL. i. S. John xx. 19, 20.

Prel. ii. The room in which the disciples are assembled, and Jesus manifesting Himself in the midst of them.

Prel. iii. Ask for grace to feel intense joy and gladness for the great glory and joy of Christ in His glorious resurrection.

The grace which S. Ignatius would have us ask for in this prelude is that we may rejoice in the great glory and joy of our Lord. We are to think first of Him and His joy. The cause of our joy is to be His joy and our love for Him. At the same time the contemplation of His joy cannot but fill us with joy and hope for ourselves; for the joy and glory which we see in Him, our Head, will one day be manifested in all His faithful members, and even now we know He is within us in a hidden mystery (*Col.* iii. 4).

I. THE JOY OF THE DISCIPLES

Great had been their sorrow while Jesus was lost to their sight. They could not believe the tidings of the Resurrection brought to them by others. Even when they saw with their own eyes, they were afraid and thought they beheld a spirit. Only when our Lord bade them touch Him to prove the reality of His body, and had given them His blessing of peace, were their fears calmed and their hearts filled with joy.

Think of their joy, the joy that radiates from His presence and fills their hearts. It is an undying joy. He that was dead is 'alive for evermore' and has 'the keys of death and of hell' (*Rev.* i. 18).

Yet, as Jesus shows Himself to them there is nothing unearthly in the appearance, no dazzling brightness as at the Transfiguration. It is not the appearance but the reality which is unearthly, and therefore the natural eye cannot see it. He shows Himself only to those who have the spiritual eye to see spiritual things. But to them He communicates a joy which no outward splendour could

awaken. His joy is theirs. He has passed through sorrow such as none other has ever borne, and the greatness of the sorrow and pain is the measure of the present joy. And this joy He communicates to them.

The spiritual glory which belongs to His risen life does not remove Him from the reality of affection which had belonged to all their earlier intercourse with Him. But now they feel themselves raised into the fellowship of a supernatural life and joy. As He shows Himself to them, His love makes them feel the spiritual unity in which they are bound to Him in His risen life. He has passed away from earthly conditions, but not from them. Whatever trials may come He will be with them strengthening them with His own joy. No wonder they are glad when they see the Lord.

II. Our Participation in their Joy

As with the disciples, so should it be with us. Like them, when we see the risen Lord we must be glad.

We see Him not with our outward eyes, but we are none the less sure that He is with us. He appeared to His disciples and vanished again from their sight, showing thereby that He was close at hand when they saw Him not. This lesson He would have us cherish for all future time. Near to us, though unseen, He would have us rejoice not in the expectation of any temporary and phenomenal apparition, but in the certainty of an abiding relationship. The heart can recognize the reality of that which is invisible. Jesus is near, and the inward vision fills the soul with peace and joy.

To see Jesus risen from the dead is indeed to know that sorrow is ended for ever, and the joy of another world has dawned. Sorrow may still surround us in the outer life. It may make itself felt in our sensitive nature. But the higher nature knows a joy that is independent of the vicissitudes of this lower world ; a joy which the world does not give and cannot destroy, a pure spiritual joy which, in spite of the trials and storms which beset the lower nature, remains undisturbed in those high regions of the soul where Jesus makes His presence felt.

We must look to Him by the exercise of faith. In due time we shall see if we persevere. 'Though the vision tarry, wait for it; because it will not always tarry, it will surely come' (*Hab.* ii. 3). There may be periods of vacancy and darkness, but these will be abundantly recompensed, if we persevere. When we see Him not our hearts are sad. We pine and droop. One moment of His presence, and we are strong again. Immediately all things shine with the brightness of His joy, and our faith grasps in Him the substance of all hopes. Surely we must be glad when we see the Lord.

III. How we are to see Jesus

We must not expect to see Jesus in any ways of natural apprehension. His presence does not belong to this world, nor can we anticipate the ways in which He will show Himself.

No human wisdom, nor any efforts of nature, will enable us to see Him. Only by faith and love can we perceive Him. We must be watching for Him, content though we do not seem to find Him, patient amidst the discipline which He appoints for us.

The eye of love will never be forgetful of Him for whom it waits. In everything it will be learning to look for His presence. The manifold veils of earthly form beneath which the soul is conscious of His approach serve only to show forth the varied fullness of His being. He may appear to us in many ways—ways too natural, too ordinary, to reveal Him, unless we are spiritually alert and watchful (cf. *Acts* x. 40, 41).

We must learn to see Him in all ways in which He draws near to us, in sacraments, in prayer, in common duties, in works of charity, in whatever joys He may give us, in the love of kindred and of friends, in the beauties of nature which manifest His presence to the watchful soul; in the darkness also and in the storms, figures of the inward darkness when we see Him not and feel the pressure of evil spirits round about us. Even then He is near us, as when He came to His disciples walking upon the waves. At all times, and in all places and circumstances, we must be

watching for Jesus to manifest Himself. We unfit ourselves to see Him, if we think there is any place, any circumstances, in which He cannot be seen. He is seen, not because circumstances seem to us favourable, but because He shows Himself; and He can show Himself wherever and whenever He wills to those who look for Him with patient love.

And if we see Him surely we must be glad. If the sight of Him does not fill the soul with joy, it cannot be a true vision. Jesus lives in joy. Joy belongs essentially to the life He now lives beyond the grave. He 'decketh Himself with light as with a garment' (*Ps.* civ. 2). The darkness of our natural hearts will not hinder our sight of Him, for He brings with Him the light by which He is seen. In His light shall we see light (*Ps.* xxxvi. 9). While we try to see Him by the light of our own understanding we fail. We must give ourselves up to live in the renewing power of His risen life. Then He will show Himself to our inward vision, transforming us into His own likeness, and in that likeness we shall find ourselves partakers of the fullness of His joy.

Thus let us meditate upon the joy of the disciples when they saw the Lord. A joy which radiates from His Person and fills their hearts; a joy which outshines all the sorrows of the world; a joy which raises those who experience it to the dignity of His own triumphant life beyond the grave.

Imitation of Christ, III. vii, viii, xxvi.

THE RISEN LORD BLESSING OUR WORK

PREL. i. S. John xxi. 1–7*a*.

Prel. ii. Our Lord standing upon the shore of the eternal world, guiding and blessing His servants in their work on earth.

Prel. iii. Pray for a growing consciousness of the presence of the risen Lord blessing all our work undertaken at His bidding.

I. OUR LORD STANDING ON THE SHORE

The disciples had toiled all the night and taken nothing, for Jesus was not yet with them. But now the darkness is passing away, and our Lord reveals Himself to them in the morning of the resurrection life.

He is on the shore. They are in the boat upon the sea. The boat symbolizes the Church; the sea, the unstable elements of this present world. The fishes are wandering in the dark unquiet waters, whence they are to be drawn by the Gospel net into the ship of the Church. Christ, from the eternal shore, guides His disciples into their work, and gives His blessing to it.

So we are to recognize that the success of all work done by us in the Church is wholly due to the presence and power of the risen Lord. How barren and fruitless is our work unless we are looking to Him, hearing His voice, obeying His directions! We toil and take nothing. Though Jesus is so near, watching us from the heavenly shore, we see Him not. And even when He speaks to us, we often do not recognize His voice. We are too much engrossed in our work, our own eager efforts, our hopes, anxieties, disappointments. It needs something of the calm, contemplative spirit of S. John to recognize the presence of Christ, who is always near to guide and help us.

Let us beware of losing sight of Jesus in our work. The more we have to do, the more manifold and pressing the claims and anxieties of our ministry, the more must we cherish a spirit of prayer and contemplation, fixing the eyes

of our heart upon the risen and ascended Lord, who alone gives power and success to what we do. Only while we look to Him and hear His voice, can we really do His work, and gather souls out of the dark unquiet waters of the world, and bring them at last to Him upon the eternal shore.

II. The Divine Provision

All souls are in the hands of God. He alone knows who are His. When we cast the Gospel net, whether in our ordinary parochial preaching, or in a mission or retreat, or in any other way, we cannot tell what the result will be. Yet the result is known to God and predestined by Him. 'All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me' (*S. John* vi. 37). It is only those whom the Father has given to Christ and draws by preventing grace, that we can reach and bring to Christ. There is nothing arbitrary in this. Souls are given to Christ by the Father, not by any capricious selection, but as the consequence of having used more or less aright their moral nature, the image of God in which He created them. Every one who has been obedient, in whatever degree, to the law written upon his heart and conscience will surely, somehow, somewhere, hear Christ's voice and come to Him; 'and him that cometh' He 'will in no wise cast out.' Christ's presence in the Church, Christ preached by His ministers, is still a testing of men's consciences. God desires all to be saved. He acts in perfect love to all. But only those who feel their need and long for a Saviour, will hear Christ's voice and be drawn to Him by the Father.

We must not be surprised nor cast down if many remain unmoved. We must do our best in trustful dependence upon God, and leave results with Him. All who have not made themselves incapable of response will, sooner or later, hear the voice of Christ and come to Him. 'Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice' (*S. John* xviii. 37). We must take care that our preaching is the true utterance of Christ. Then 'all who are of the truth' will hear His voice in us, and be drawn out of the restless waters of the world into the safety of the Church, and if they abide therein, be brought at last to the eternal shore.

III. The Casting of the Net

1. *It was an act divinely guided.* If we will look to Christ for guidance and obey Him, we may be sure that His word will not return to Him void (*Isa.* lv. 11). Our words and our acts often fail because they are spoken or done merely out of routine, or of our own wisdom, or even to please ourselves and gain the praise of men. How different it might be if we were careful to look up to God in prayer and seek His guidance before choosing the subjects of our sermons and preparing them, before visiting in the parish, before an interview or any other detail of our work.

Christ is watching us and ready to direct us. Look up to Him and say, 'On which side, O Lord? I am but a child, I know nothing and can do nothing, guide Thou me.'

'Cast the net on the right side.' There is a wrong as well as a right side for the casting of the Gospel net. This is true not only of preaching, but of every kind of ministry. There is a gauche, awkward, tactless way of presenting truth and offering help, as well as a way that is tactful and winning, a way—to use the figure before us—that is adroit and dexterous.[1] Christ will teach us this way, if we look to Him. He will give us such sympathy, insight, and tact, as will commend our office and our message. This will be to cast the net 'on the right side.'

2. *It was an act of faith.* How much of the anxiety of our work would be removed, if we looked for it to prosper because of our Lord's bidding and power, instead of letting our minds dwell upon the apparent prospects of success, or be cast down with a sense of failure in the past. 'We have toiled all the night, and taken nothing.' Yes, but now the night is past, the morning of the resurrection has dawned, and Jesus is standing upon the shore to guide and give power to all our acts.

IV. The Finding

The multitude of fishes, so far beyond expectation. The purposes of Christ are always greater than our thoughts:

[1] Cf. C. J. Vaughan, *Addresses to Young Clergymen.*

His fulfilments beyond our hopes. Let wonder at what He does through us expand our hope of what He will yet do. Let us look in faith for the glory of God to be manifested in all that we do at His bidding.

'It is the Lord.' Success must open our eyes to behold the power and glory of Christ. We must not rest in it as if it were our own doing, or dwell on it with self-complacency and pride. We must give thanks and praise to Him. The thought of self mingling with what we do acts like a non-conductor, hindering the divine life which would otherwise pass through us to give life to others. Success must rather humble us with a fresh consciousness of our nothingness and unworthiness. Thus it is that every success must lead us to look away from self to our Lord, to recognize His presence and power, and our dependence upon Him.

It must also bind us the more to Him in grateful love, and in entire dedication of ourselves to Him. So shall we be learning the lesson of this manifestation—learning how the risen Lord reveals Himself to us as present with His Church, giving fruitfulness and blessing to all that is done at His bidding and in dependence upon Him. The toil of earth is fruitless : the supernatural blessing is the gift of the risen Lord.

Imitation of Christ, III. xxx, xxxiv.

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

PREL. i. S. Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

Prel. ii. Contemplate our Lord as He rises from the ground. The eyes of His disciples follow Him until a cloud hides Him from their sight (*Acts* i. 9). Never till now had they felt themselves to be so entirely one with Him.

Prel. iii. Pray for grace to realize your union with Christ in His ascended life and glory.

I. CHRIST'S ASCENSION

As they beheld 'He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.' On other occasions when our Lord vanished out of sight He remained in the same region of spiritual life into which He had in some measure brought them. Now it is to be so no longer. While the cloud hides Him, He passes on into a higher stage of glorified life. As the true High Priest He enters into the Holy of Holies, heaven itself (*Heb.* ix. 24). Yet He does not leave them. He draws them on along with Himself. They experience within themselves the power by which His human nature rises to new glory. Truly it was fulfilled in them, 'He shall draw them with cords of a man, with bands of love' (*Hos.* xi. 4). By a two-fold power His Person works upon them, by His Body and Blood which they had received on Maundy Thursday, and by the Spirit of Love breathed upon them after His Resurrection. This union was not transient. It was abiding. Thus by His Presence within them they must have felt themselves to share, in a mystery, the glory and the joy of His ascent. He was parted from them in outward intercourse, but He held them to Himself in the unity of an indissoluble life.

II. OUR SHARE IN THIS MYSTERY

We are partakers of Christ's risen and ascended life. In baptism we died and rose again with Him (*Rom.* vi. 3, 4). With Him we are 'quickened,' 'raised up,' 'made to sit together in heavenly places' (*Eph.* ii. 4–6). The words are

used of our Lord absolutely, but of us relatively, depending on our relation to Him as members of His Body. In our communions we have our life in Him and His life in us continually renewed and developed, through the participation of His Body and Blood—not His dead body, but His living, glorified Body, giving forth the Spirit which is His Life, quickening us here and now, and preparing our bodies also for their resurrection in glory (*S. John* vi. 51–58).

The mystery of our Lord's Ascension discloses to us the purpose of these new powers of Christ's glorified life, which are imparted to us. Christ risen and ascended, and dwelling within us is to awaken in us a desire for God. As He went to the Father, so in us He goes to the Father. He draws us onward with Himself; and the goal is that we may come to the Father, in heart and mind now, hereafter in our resurrection bodies also.

Thus, then, think of the marvel of our life in Christ. We do really share His risen and ascended life even now. 'Our citizenship is' already 'in heaven.' Our home is there. We are 'fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,' 'made to sit together with Him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (*Phil.* iii. 20; *Eph.* ii. 19; ii. 6). So think of the power of Christ's Ascension working in us already in a hidden mystery, to be manifested openly when He shall come again in glory (*Col.* iii. 3, 4; *Phil.* iii. 21).

III. Heavenly-Mindedness

'Set your affection on things above.' 'Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God' (*Col.* iii. 1, 2). It is possible for us to do this because the mind of the ascended Christ is given to us (1 *Cor.* ii. 16), and His Spirit dwells within us. We have not ourselves to make these heavenly affections and desires: it is the Holy Spirit who will do this for us. Our part is so to put away sin, and to discipline our lives, that Christ by His Spirit may be in us a principle of ascension, of heavenly-mindedness, a habit of desiring God and rising up to Him in holy aspirations, *Ascensiones in corde* (*Ps.* lxxxiii. 6, Vulg.; A.V. lxxxiv. 5).

Think of the mystery of these holy aspirations, these

upliftings of the mind and heart to high and heavenly desires—whence do they come? Not out of the shallow ground of mere natural emotions, which seek their own consolation in spiritual things. No, but out of the spirit of penitence and the struggle with sin, *in valle lacrymarum*. It was S. Paul, who felt himself to be the chief of sinners and experienced that long conflict with the thorn in his flesh, who had such abundant revelations given to him, and was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words (1 *Tim.* i. 15; 2 *Cor.* xii. 4, 7). So it is not in a pleasant, easy-going, self-satisfied life, that we shall know anything about *Ascensiones in corde*. We must suffer with Christ, if we are to be glorified with Him (*Rom.* viii. 17).

But Jesus Christ comes to us in our penitence, and in our conflict with evil, and shows us His glory, and awakens in us the desire to follow Him. Then we know that all the glories of the risen and ascended Lord are not for Himself alone, but for us, His members, also. Then the springs of holy affections are opened within us, and our minds and hearts rise up to high and heavenly desires.

Ascensiones in corde. Let us not think that these supernatural upliftings of the soul are to be looked for only in some few great saints, and have no place in ordinary Christians like ourselves. No, they are for all. The prayer of our Ascension Day Collect is for all, 'Grant, that like as we do believe Thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell.'

In retreat God will give to those who seek Him, not merely courage to plod on as we may have done before, but *Ascensiones in corde*, stirrings of a higher life, aspirations after closer union with God, advance in prayer, fresh experiences of the Holy Spirit working within us.

So, then, as we leave the retreat and go back to our work, it should be not merely with a vague hope that we may do a little better than hitherto, but with the sure conviction that God can do everything for us, that He can really lift up our hearts to heavenly desires. Let us ask for great things, for heavenly-mindedness, for the spirit of prayer and union with God, for spiritual power in our ministry. God

desires to give all these things, and more than we can ask or think. It is our earthly-mindedness, our feeble faith and hope, the littleness of our desires, which hinders Him.

Think of the change that came over the Apostles after the Ascension of our Lord and the coming of the Holy Ghost—their courage, their joy, their power to bear witness to Christ. In the world they had tribulation. Privation, hardships, persecution, and danger were their daily portion; but in all they rejoiced, for in heart they lived in heaven. The joy of the Lord was their strength. Let us too lift up our hearts to Jesus in His glory. He wants us just to give ourselves to Him, to trust Him, to be sure that He is nearer to us, mightier, more loving, and more ready to help us than we have yet realized. Then He will be able to make us partakers of His joy, while we live and work for Him.

Imitation of Christ, III. v, xxi, xlix.

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

PREL. i. Acts ii. 1–4.

Prel. ii. The room where the Apostles are assembled, and the Holy Ghost descending upon them in the likeness of fiery tongues.

Prel. iii. Pray that you may be filled with the Holy Ghost, so as to live and act in the power of His holy inspiration.

I. WAITING FOR THE GIFT

The Apostles and others were gathered together, as it were in retreat, at Jerusalem, waiting for the promised gift of the Comforter. How would He come to them? Would they be permitted to see Him, or would His presence be altogether inward in their hearts? They could not tell.

At last the day of Pentecost came, and with it the sound as of a mighty wind, and the appearance of fiery tongues parting asunder and sitting upon each of them.

The wind and the fire were not the Spirit Himself, but only outward tokens of His coming. They passed away. What remained? Only by experience did the Apostles come to know. Only as they found themselves endued with powers beyond themselves. Only in the experience of daily life, with its trials and needs, did they gradually come to know all that the blessed gift meant. The record of their discoveries is to be found in their writings.

II SOME OF THE THINGS THEY TELL US

1. The first great discovery that the Apostles made was that the coming of the Holy Spirit was the fulfilment of our Lord's promise: 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. . . . At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you' (*S. John* xiv. 18, 20). The Spirit came not to supply the place of an absent Christ, but to effect His abiding presence. With the Spirit, Christ came again to be not merely with them, but within them (*S. John* xiv. 17). This experience was the foundation of all that the Apostles tell us about the

indwelling presence of Christ. They came to know Him no longer 'after the flesh' (2 *Cor.* v. 16), but as Christ in them, in their hearts now, and 'the hope of glory' to be manifested hereafter (*Col.* i. 27). To us also the Holy Ghost has come to lead us on to this same experimental knowledge of Christ within ourselves.

2. *S. Paul speaks of Him as 'the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.'* He prays that God would give to his Ephesian converts 'the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ; the eyes of their hearts (τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας) being enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints' (*Eph.* i. 17, 18). Observe that the Spirit of wisdom and revelation acts not on the intellect only, but primarily upon the heart, the affections. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to us whatever we know of Christ. He receives of the things of Christ and shows them unto us (*S. John* xvi. 14), opening the eyes of our hearts to see and love them.

So we need to pray for this Spirit of revelation to give us ever fresh and deeper views of our calling in Christ, and of all the divine possibilities of it. This is the purpose of our daily meditation, that we may be taught more and more deeply the things of Christ, by the inward teaching of the Holy Ghost (*S. John* xiv. 26; 1 *S. John* ii. 20, 27). Think of this as you say the *Veni Creator*.

3. *He is the Spirit of power.* 'God hath given us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline' (2 *Tim.* i. 7, R.V.). Therefore let us not be timid or faint-hearted because we lack some natural powers and gifts; but, relying on the Spirit, let us fulfil our ministry with hope and courage.

4. *He is the Spirit of prayer.* How greatly we need His help in our prayers. We outgrow to a great extent books of devotion. They do not help us as they once did. We need to learn to pray without books. For this we have the promised help of the Holy Ghost, the only real Teacher of prayer (*Rom.* viii. 26; *Eph.* vi. 18; *S. Jude* 20).

5. *He is the Spirit of joy and thanksgiving.* 'Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns

and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord ; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ ' (*Eph.* v. 18–20). It is the gift of the Spirit which is to enable us to be thankful. And we are to give thanks ' always ' and ' for all things,' in adversity as well as in prosperity. S. John Chrysostom accustomed himself in every trouble and suffering to say ' glory be to God.' Thus he gave God thanks ' at all times,' however troubled and sad the lower part of his soul might be. It is a great act of love to God thus to give Him thanks for all things, especially in times of adversity and depression. And often it will lift us out of ourselves and our despondency into the joy of God, which is our strength (*Neh.* viii. 10).

III. Some Laws of the Spirit's Working

1. *The Spirit is given in answer to prayer.* It is a gift we must ask for ; but if we ask, it will certainly be given. ' If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children ; *how much more* shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him ? ' (*S. Luke* xi. 13). In your meditation dwell upon that ' how much more.' How sure we may be that we shall have the gift if we ask for it.

2. *The Spirit works in proportion as hindrances are removed,* e.g. dissipation of heart and mind ; lack of order in our life ; giving ourselves too freely and engrossingly to outward things ; indulgence in what seem little sins. There must be some measure of real self-discipline in every Christian life, holding ourselves back from things that deaden and choke the life of the Spirit in us. But the ascetic life, in whatever measure we are led by the Spirit of God to practise it, will not make us gloomy, or sad, or unfit for the work we have to do. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love, joy, peace, and power. Where He dwells there must be both joy and power (*Gal.* v. 22 ; 2 *Tim.* i. 7).

We are accustomed to pray after our Communions, ' Blood of Christ inebriate me.' The Blood inebriates, i.e. cheers and gladdens, because the Holy Ghost is the life of that Blood which we receive from the chalice ; and the more

He takes possession of us, the more shall we be lifted up into His joy. So we may confidently look for this supernatural joyousness in proportion as all that hinders the Spirit's work in us is removed. Think of this when you receive in the chalice the 'Wine that maketh glad the heart of man' (*Ps.* civ. 15).

3. *The Spirit is already in us.* In order to be filled with the Spirit we have only to use, in faith, a power which has been given and will be discovered in the using. 'Be filled with the Spirit' (*Eph.* v. 18). S. Paul is not speaking of the initial work of the Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation, but of our use and development of the gift then given. The verb (πληροῦσθε) is in the present tense. It speaks not of receiving a full measure once for all, but of the continual filling up from that which is already there, as the marble basin is continually replenished by the spring of water welling up within it (cf. *S. John* iv. 14).

And the precept implies a corresponding promise. It implies that the Spirit will fill us, will take possession of us and flood our whole being if we will let Him. What encouragement this should give us! As the holiness and the glory of any action is derived not from its external importance, nor from anything in ourselves, but from its being an act of the Body of Christ, we see how truly divine the simplest acts of our life and ministry may be, if done in the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

Let us open our hearts to desire and receive more and more of this divine gift. If we have the Holy Spirit we have all. Whatever is good, lovely, pure, strong, uplifting; whatever is a power to work the work of God in ourselves, and through us in others—all is the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Let us resolve to think more of the Holy Spirit and His work in us than we have done. Let us not forget Him in our devotions. It is He who will reveal Christ to us, and form Christ in us. Let us pray that we may experience His renewing power day by day.

Collect, Christmas Day.

Imitation of Christ, III. xxvii.

THE LOVE OF GOD

S. IGNATIUS ends our retreat with a meditation on the love of God, i.e. God's love for us, and our response of love to Him.

At the outset he bids us note two things. 'The first,' as S. John also admonishes us, 'that love ought to be shown in deeds rather than in words': 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth' (1 *S. John* iii. 18). And the second, 'that love consists in mutual interchange on either side of that which each has, or is able to give.'

Bearing these two things in mind, let us meditate upon this twofold activity of love, God's love of us and our response of love to Him.

Prel. i. Behold yourself standing before God our Lord, and before the angels and the saints interceding for you.

Prel. ii. Ask for an interior knowledge of the great benefits you have received, so that, acknowledging them to the full, you may be able in all things to love and serve His Divine Majesty.

I

Calling to mind all God's benefits bestowed upon me, I will reflect upon them and see in them so many evidences of His love.

1. *Benefits of creation and preservation* My creation. Am I thankful for this as I ought to be? Perhaps in some moments of ill temper or despondency I have wished that I had never been born. But now, at the end of my retreat, I can thank Him from my heart that He called me out of nothingness, and created me for so glorious an end, higher even than that of the angels, and for attaining this end has given me an intellect to know Him, a heart to love Him, and a will to serve and obey Him.

My preservation and all the blessings of this life. Moment by moment, from my birth until now, God has upheld me in being; shielded me from so many dangers and evils;

supplied me with all things needful for life—food, clothing, shelter, etc.—and added so much that ministers to the joy of life over and above what is necessary, e.g. the manifold beauties of nature, the happiness of friendship, the treasures of literature, and science, and art.

2. *Benefits of Redemption.* Above all I will bless and thank God for His 'inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.'

Let me think of all that is contained in this summary statement—the love of God in giving His dear Son to be our Saviour; the Incarnation, Passion, and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ; His Resurrection, Ascension, and the gift of the Holy Ghost; His presence with us in the Church and Sacraments; my own status as 'a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.'

As I think of all this, I will thank God from my heart that He has 'called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour,' and will pray for grace to 'continue in the same unto my life's end.'

3. *Benefits of a more personal and individual kind.* Talents and opportunities God has given me. His providential guidance of my life, so full of love and wisdom, as if I were the only one He had to care for (*S. Matt.* vi. 26; x. 30). Health of body and a sound mind; how different my life would have been, if I had been born an idiot or a cripple, or blind, or deaf and dumb! Religious helps and privileges, special graces, my vocation to the priesthood.

Then, lifting up my eyes to heaven, I will think of the special place our Lord is preparing for me there (*S. John* xiv. 3; 1 *Cor.* ii. 9).

Meditating upon all these benefits, how shall not my heart make its response of love to Him who has so loved me?

But love must show itself in deeds and in mutual interchange of gifts. What then can I give to God? All that I am and have belongs to Him already. But God, in His love, will accept His own gifts if I offer them again to Him as a sacrifice of love and thanksgiving. 'Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and

all my will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all this to me ; to Thee, O Lord, I restore it ; all is Thine, dispose of it entirely according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is enough for me.'

II

1. *God is present in His creatures,* sustaining them in being, giving them life, and all the varied qualities by which they benefit me and help me to attain my end. With what reverence, then, and care should I use them, seeing that in using them I am in some way in contact with God Himself !

2. *But in me He dwells in a far more intimate and wonderful way,* not only by His presence and power, as in other creatures, but by His Holy Spirit, as in His Temple, sanctifying me both in body and soul (1 *Cor.* iii. 16, 17). How can I worthily praise Him for this ? What return of love can I make ? Surely I ought to live, to think, and speak, and act, in constant remembrance of His presence within me, to reverence it, to listen to His voice speaking in my heart and conscience, to spend time with Him in meditation and prayer, to detach my heart from creatures, loving them only in and for Him, and using them as aids to help me to love and serve Him better.

III

God is not only present in all creatures, but He is ever acting in and through them for my good. They have no power of themselves to give me either help or joy ; but God makes all of them, whether they be things naturally pleasant or painful, to ' work together for good to them that love Him ' (*Rom.* viii. 28). Health or sickness, wealth or poverty, honour or abasement, a long life or a short one, and whatever other things or circumstances may be comprehended under these heads, are creatures of God, and His love is ever acting through them for my discipline and sanctification in this life, and for my eternal reward hereafter.

This activity of God in and through creatures for my good shows me what my response of love to Him should be.

It should be an active love. It must not stop in sterile contemplation or mere emotion; it must bear fruit in obedience to His will and commandments, and in active love towards others (*S. John* xiv. 15; 1 *S. John* iii. 18; iv. 20). I will therefore offer myself to God to act and labour in all things for love of Him, and for the good of others. 'Take, O Lord, and receive, etc.,' as above.

IV

Lastly, *I will lift up my heart and contemplate God Himself*, from whom all good things proceed, as the rays from the sun or the stream from its fountain (*S. Jas.* i. 17). I will love and praise Him not only for what He gives me and does for me, but for what He is in Himself, the infinite and eternal Truth, Wisdom, Holiness, and Love. Whatever of good, or wisdom, or power, or love, there may be in me or in any other creature comes from Him. There is therefore no place for pride or vanity. All is from God, and I must use all for His glory, rising from creatures to contemplate the Creator, setting my affections not on His gifts, but on Himself, as the supreme end of all my life.

Thus I come back to the starting-point of my retreat, only with a difference. Those great truths which in the Foundation were addressed mainly to my reason, now appeal to my heart as I contemplate the boundless love of God. All that I am and have is His gift to me. In response to His love I can but give back all to Him, loving and praising Him not for His gifts only but for what He is in Himself, infinite and eternal Love. 'Take, O Lord, and receive, etc.,' as above.

He who can make this oblation from his heart has gained the crowning fruit of a good retreat. But what if I cannot honestly make such words my own? Well, do I at least recognize their truth, and wish that I could make them mine? If so, my retreat has not been fruitless. For to wish to love God is already the beginning of love; and God, who has begun this good work in me, will, if I do not hinder Him, perfect it 'until the day of Jesus Christ' (*Phil.* i. 6).

Imitation of Christ, III. v, xxi, xxxiv.

RETREAT II

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THE SOLITUDE OF RETREAT

I. Alone with God

One great object of my retreat is to realize what I am to God, and what God is to me. To do this I must try to bring myself face to face with Him—*solus cum Solo.*

In one sense I am always alone with God. There is a closeness of relation between Him and every soul, which makes all other relationships distant by comparison. But there are two moments in which I shall intensely realize this.

1. First, the moment of death. *Je mourrai seul* (*Pascal*). I shall die alone. No friend, no companion, can go with me through the valley of death. There is but One who can be with me then. Happy the soul that can say with the Psalmist : ' Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me ' (*Ps.* xxiii. 4).

2. Secondly, and more awfully still, the day of judgement. Then, alone with God, every soul must give in its account. ' Every one of us shall give account of himself to God ' (*Rom.* xiv. 12), not lost in a crowd, not hidden in the mass, but each as a separate individual. There will be no comparing of myself with others then, but the full consciousness that God is the sole Judge, that all depends on Him, His knowledge of me, His judgement, His sentence.

3. But I am not less alone with Him now. He is my Creator, and moment by moment He upholds me in being. ' In Him we live, and move, and have our being ' (*Acts* xvii. 28). He knows me through and through. ' Thou art about my path, and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways ' (*Ps.* cxxxix. 2). He has loved me, and cared for me all the days of my life.

Do I realize this? How many things shut out the thought and sense of His presence—society, amusements, family, cares, work, routine. This shows the need of

retreat. Let me, then, concentrate my whole soul on this thought, I am alone with God. I will see what He is to me; what I am to Him.

II. How to be alone with God

In order to be the more alone with God in my retreat, I resolve, God helping me:

1. To cut myself off as absolutely as possible from the outer world; not to think of my home, family, parish, plans, hopes, interests, anxieties, cares.

2. To write no letters, open none, think of none.

3. To keep silence; not of the lips only, but of the heart and imagination, restraining them from all thoughts and images that do not belong to my retreat.

4. To keep a guard over my senses, especially my eyes, that they may not be avenues through which distractions enter.

5. To read only what may help my soul: not to look into many books, but to keep to those only which shall be given me.

6. At meals, to listen attentively to the reading; or, if alone, to think of our Lord as the Bread of life; of my own unworthiness, and His goodness in feeding me; of the sweetness of His word: 'O how sweet are Thy words unto my throat; yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth' (*Ps.* cxix. 103); of the hunger of the soul, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness' (*S. Matt.* v. 6).

7. To begin, carry on, and end each meditation according to the instructions given me. To begin each meditation with an act of faith in the presence of God, desiring to be taught by Him: 'O hide not Thy commandments from me' (*Ps.* cxix. 19). 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth' (1 *Sam.* iii. 9).

8. If the meditation is blessed to me, I will acknowledge all as coming from Him. If I seem to fail, I will humble

myself, and persevere in patience. 'Though the vision tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry' (*Hab.* ii. 3).

9. From time to time I will think what resolution God would have me make, and I will be generous in my response: 'What shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits He hath done unto me?' (*Ps.* cxvi. 11). 'I will not offer unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing' (2 *Sam.* xxiv. 24).

III. Hope and Desire

I will enter upon my retreat with hope and desire.

1. Think of Jacob wrestling through the night alone with God. 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me. . . . And He blessed him there' (*Gen.* xxxii. 26, 29).

2. Or Moses, in the mount alone with God, and the glory upon his face when he came down (*Exod.* xxxiv. 29).

3. Or the deaf and dumb man led aside from the crowd (*S. Mark* vii. 33, 34). So may the ears of my soul be opened, and my tongue loosed.

4. Or the retreat in the upper room at Jerusalem; they continued in prayer, and then the Baptism of Fire (see *Acts* i. 14; ii. 1–4).

So I will enter upon my retreat with hope, and trust in God, and desire for His blessing. What can He not do? What is He not ready to do? Surely I have reason to hope and trust in Him! He has chosen me, called me, done so much for me already; done so much through me, though so unworthy; guarded me, guided me, brought me back when I have strayed, pardoned me when penitent, loaded me with manifold graces, given me the opportunity of this retreat.

And now what is to be the issue of my retreat? That depends upon my will, responding to God's grace. Therefore I will try to give myself wholly to this work. I will enter upon it with recollection both exterior and interior, with calmness, generosity, courage, docility to the Holy Spirit, with a serious purpose and a real desire to press

onward in correspondence with the grace God will give me. I will meditate, and pray, and resolve. I will look steadily at my life, comparing it with the Gospel standard. I will bring under this searching light all the details of my life, my home, my family, my parish, schools, church, sacristy, pulpit, confessional, my daily rule of life. And as God gives me light and shows me His will, I will try to do it.

IV. Final Thoughts

1 What if this retreat should be the last I shall have an opportunity of making? If I knew that it was to be so, how would I wish to make it? A retreat well made ought to leave me prepared for death.

2. It is God who has given me the opportunity of this retreat. He wants to set me right with Himself, to give me some blessing, and to lead me onward in the way of my vocation. I shall not fail of His good purpose for me, if I seek Him with all my heart.

3. Therefore to-night I will pray God to bless my retreat, and to help me to make it well.

Imitation of Christ, I. xx; III. xxiii.

THE PERFECTION REQUIRED IN A PRIEST

PREL. i. Think of the day of your ordination—recall the high ideals and hopes you had then ; and ask, Are these my ideals still ? Have they ripened and developed by time and experience as they ought to have done ?

Prel. ii. Pray God to renew in you the true spirit of your vocation. Think of the perfection to which a priest is called.

I. BECAUSE OF HIS VOCATION

1. Every Christian is called to a life of real holiness. ' God hath chosen us in Christ that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love . . . that we should be to the praise of the glory of His grace ' (*Eph.* i. 4–6). S. Paul laboured that he might ' present every man perfect in Christ Jesus ' (*Col.* i. 28).

2. But the priest is called to a special, and in some sense even greater perfection than the ordinary Christian. S. Ambrose says : ' God requires more perfection of the bishop than of the priest, of the priest than of the deacon, and of all who are members of the clergy than of the simple Christian.' And S. Gregory Nazianzen : ' There are men of consummate virtue, men who despise earthly things, and who, through intimate communion with God, keep themselves elevated above all creatures ; men who are in regard to other men what the soul is to the body. To men of this stamp it belongs to be pastors over the flock of Jesus Christ.'

Ponder those words ' consummate virtue,' such ' intimate communion with God ' in prayer that the soul is able to keep itself ' elevated above all creatures.'

Again, S. Augustine says that all who see a priest should recognize him as ' a man of God.' Is that what men would say of me ?—those who know me in my parish, those who meet me when travelling or on a holiday ?

And Bishop Bull, in one of his charges, speaks of 'exemplary holiness' as requisite in a priest; and of a bad priest he says that he is 'the most pernicious creature that moves on God's earth . . . the greatest and most desperate sinner.'

II. Because of his Ordination

Think of the consecration of the Levites under the old covenant. 'Thou shalt separate the Levites from among the children of Israel, and they shall be Mine. And after that shall they go in to the service of the Tabernacle' (*Num.* viii. 14, 15). Note here two things: (1) separation from others, (2) dedication to God. If these two things were necessary for the Levites of the old covenant, how much more are they necessary for the Christian priest.

1. Ordination separates us from the world. Though the priest has to live and work in the world, he must not be of the world. He must always feel an inward separation from it. But this inward separation will not be preserved without at least some degree of outward separation. If the priest goes freely into society, and adopts its ways and amusements, there will not only be much waste of time, but there is sure to be a loss of spiritual character and force. He is sure to imbibe something of the spirit of the world, to take the world's view of many things, to judge as it judges.

Remember that by ordination we are separated from the world, its maxims, its aims, its judgements, its riches, its honours. This is essential. Next to the downright bad priest there is no greater stumbling block than the worldly priest, the priest who follows the ways of the world, and adopts the thoughts and sentiments of the world.

2. By ordination we are dedicated wholly to God. 'They shall be Mine.' We belonged indeed to God before. We are His creatures. He made us; redeemed us; sanctified us by His Holy Spirit. But as priests we belong to Him in a new way, by a different and more special kind of consecration. We have received the Holy Ghost to consecrate and fit us for the office and work of priests. We share not only the life but the priesthood of Jesus Christ. This is the

indelible 'character' impressed upon us by Holy Orders. It carries with it all the graces needed for our life as priests, with its manifold privileges, duties, trials, and dangers.

Consider, then, how our priesthood does really bind us to God, while it separates us from the world; and how the Holy Ghost will fill all our faculties of body, mind, and spirit to make them effectual for the divine purpose, if we will let Him. Therefore all must be kept for Him, consecrated to His service, our thoughts, our words, our hearts, our bodily powers and senses.

Think of this in one particular, which may serve for a sample of all the rest—our words. What watchfulness and self-discipline it will require so to rule our tongues that our people shall never hear us say at other times anything inconsistent with what we say in the pulpit!

So let us think of our priestly consecration, by which we are separated from the world and dedicated to God.

III. Because of his Work

Think what it is to celebrate the Holy Eucharist. We speak and act in the person of Christ, as sharing His priesthood. The voice which speaks is ours, but the words and the effects which follow are of the almighty power of God.

1. Think of the closeness of contact with our Lord. When we hold the Blessed Sacrament in our hands, it is Jesus Christ with whom we are in contact, hidden beneath the sacramental veils, but really present. If our eyes could be opened, like those of Cleopas and his companion at Emmaus, we should know that there is nothing in all the world more real than this presence of Jesus with us.

What obligation to holiness can be greater than that which arises from such a close and frequent contact with the Word made flesh? S. Chrysostom says: 'The hand which consecrates ought to be purer than the solar light.' And if the hand, what also of the lips which speak the consecrating words, and the eyes which gaze upon the sacred Host? And if such should be the sanctity of the body, what should be the purity of the soul of the priest, his memory, his imagination, his heart, his conscience?

2. And then besides his relations with the sacred Body of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, the priest has also manifold relations with the mystical Body of Christ, i.e. with the members of Christ, some of whom are especially committed to his charge. He is set to be the pastor of the sheep committed to him, to rule, and tend, and feed them. He is to be their teacher, guide, example. He is to be father, physician, and judge of souls. What sanctity, what charity, humility, patience, wisdom, all this will require !

How can he help others if he is not following after holiness himself ? The worldly, the lukewarm, even the sinful priest, can indeed administer valid sacraments. God will not suffer His people to be defrauded of necessary sacramental graces because of the unworthiness of the priest. But what of the priest who ministers in such a state ? His ministrations can only turn to his own condemnation. And there are other parts of a priest's work which do depend very largely on personal holiness. His preaching, his pastoral intercourse, his power to touch hearts, to convert sinners, to build up the faithful and guide them in holiness—all this will depend very largely on what the priest is in himself.

3. And then, too, the misery for ourselves : to have to speak to others of the spiritual life when we are not ourselves trying to live it ; to be by our office continually engaged with holy things, yet to remain unchanged ourselves. Think not only of the fruitlessness, but of the real misery of working for others and not caring for our own souls. ' They made me keeper of the vineyards ; but mine own vineyard have I not kept ' (*Cant.* i. 6). Can this be said of me ? Let me, in my retreat, make sure at least of this, that I am myself seeking to cultivate that spiritual life which I speak of and minister to others.

Imitation of Christ, IV. v.

THE PRIEST'S SIN

PREL. i. Isaiah beholding the vision of God. It brings to him the consciousness of sin, his own and his people's (*Isa.* vi. 1–5).

Prel. ii. Pray that the thought of the holiness of your vocation may deepen in you the sense of sin.

Sin in a Christian is a far graver matter than in an unbaptized person. And in like manner the sin of a priest is far worse than that of a layman. We may consider this aggravated character of sin in a priest from several points of view.

I. BECAUSE OF HIS PRIESTLY AND CONSECRATED CHARACTER

1. Sin in a priest is a violation of a sacred engagement which Ordination has added to that of Baptism. In his ordination the priest has been set apart for God and His service, consecrated and dedicated to Him. The sanctity which the benediction of the Church sets upon her altars and her sacred vessels cannot for a moment compare with that which the priestly character confers on us. And the priest who sins profanes this sacred character. His sin has therefore a special guilt of sacrilege.

2. Again, in instituting the priestly office our Lord intended it for the continuation of His own work on earth. The priest is His representative, His ambassador, His agent. 'As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you' (*S. John* xx. 21). 'Even so'—meditate upon these words. Compare your life and ministry with that of our Lord recorded in the Gospels, and see how all sins and even allowed imperfections are the contradiction of that 'even so.'

3. Or think of our Lord's words: 'Ye are the salt of the earth' (*S. Matt.* v. 13). This signifies the personal possession of the sanctity which resists corruption, and communicates the same power of resistance to others by contact and in-

fluence. 'But if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men' (ibid.).

4. Even the world expects a priest to be holy, so far as it understands what holiness is, and is shocked and scandalized when he falls below the standard it demands.

For all these reasons the sin of a priest is worse than that of the layman. It is a sin of sacrilege against the holy character of the priesthood; a sin opposed to the whole purpose of his calling; a sin which even the world condemns.

II. Because of his greater Light and Grace

1. Much of the sin committed in the world is committed in more or less of ignorance or thoughtlessness, which so far lessens its guilt. But the priest cannot sin in ignorance. He knows the requirements of God and of his state. He is, or ought to be, constantly occupied in sacred studies. He has to rebuke sin in others, in sermons, in the confessional, in visiting. His daily meditation, his recitation of the divine office, his frequent approaches to the altar, the confessions he hears, his visits to the sick and dying, his teaching of little children in their innocence—all these must bring home to him the sense of guilt and shame if he is himself living in sin. Oh, how often in the confessional have our own sins been brought to our remembrance as we listened to our penitents! How often have we felt the reproach of conscience when we preached about sins to which we ourselves were in some way yielding; or felt our tongues tied so that we dared not speak!

2. Again, the priest's sin is committed in spite of special and manifold helps and graces:

(*a*) External helps which come from his position; from being one to whom others look up, and whom they expect to be different from ordinary people; from the simple fact of his wearing clerical dress and being known to be a priest. The clerical dress is a real protection. It should help us to remember whose we are, and whom we serve (*Acts* xxvii. 23).

(*b*) Interior graces which God gives so bountifully to priests. Think of these manifold graces in your own case: all that led up to your ordination, the first inward drawings of grace, the deepening attraction and sense of vocation as time went on, at school, at the University; the helps of Cuddesdon or Ely, or some other place where you made your more immediate preparation; the holy lessons you began to learn there of discipline and prayer; your first confession; the growing attraction of the love of God and love of man. Then the ordination itself, with all its bright hopes and earnest purposes. And as time went on the experience of the ministry, your frequent approaches to the altar, the joy of preaching the Gospel, the evidences of the power of the word and the sacraments in others. Surely after all this the priest must feel that his sin is far worse than the sin of those who have not had the helps and graces of his vocation.

III. Because of its graver Consequences

1. The consequences to himself. The priest sins against greater knowledge and light, and God often punishes him with spiritual blindness and a withdrawal of grace. Thus his heart becomes hardened, conscience is dulled, sin no longer shocks or terrifies him, repeated acts pass into habits—habits of carelessness, sloth, omission of duties, especially of spiritual duties, prayer, self-examination, confession, meditation, preparation for communion. Little sins lead on to greater ones, and these again to those which are mortal, and the priest in his blindness and hardness of heart goes on till his whole life becomes a lie and a sacrilege. Thus he heaps sin upon sin, and the end, except for a very miracle of grace, must be a state of utter hardness and final impenitence.

2. And beyond his own ruin there are the consequences to others—the loss of souls committed to his charge. For if the priest is careless of his own salvation, how shall he care for the salvation of others? What blessing will there be upon his work while he is living himself without the grace of God? If good priests save souls, bad ones destroy them.

They destroy them by their negligence, and idleness, and lack of zeal.

They destroy them also by their evil example. They become a cause of scandal, and give occasion to the enemies of God and of His Church to blaspheme.

Worst of all, the priest may himself become the tempter, leading others into sin along with himself. Such things are not unknown. And of those who have thus fallen, who among them when he first began to grow lukewarm and careless and to yield to little sins ever thought it would come to this? Who among them but thought he could stop when he wished? Alas, we know the truth of the poet's words, *Facilis descensus Averno* (Virgil, *Æn.* vi. 126). Our only safety is to resist the first beginnings, to be careful of our own spiritual life, and to use to the utmost all the means of grace.

So let us pray for contrition, for fear and hatred of all sins, even the least. Let us hate them and shun them for the love of God, and because we desire to become really spiritual men and holy priests, closely united to our Lord in purity of heart, and in fervent love and zeal.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxii; III. xiv, liv.

THE PRIEST'S PENITENCE

If we are to do the work of Christ and really touch the hearts of our people, we must purify our own hearts. If religion were merely a moral discipline we might be content to utter certain moral precepts, and if our life were not in open contradiction to what we taught, it might suffice. But religion is more than morality. It is a supernatural life. It cannot be taught or conveyed by mere words. It can only be taught and conveyed by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is the voice of Christ which must speak through us in the power of the Spirit. But if we are to speak in the power of the Spirit of Christ we must be living with the life of Christ. Words have no power without life. They have no life without Christ. They have not Christ, unless He is living in our hearts. If we realize this, we shall realize our need of penitence and purity of heart. So let us think of the priest's penitence, how needful it is, and what its character ought to be.

Prel. i. Think of the penitence of the saints, of S. Augustine, S. Bernard, S. Philip Neri, the Curé d'Ars, of Keble, and Pusey, as it is revealed in their lives.

Prel. ii. Pray that you may have a like deep and abiding penitence.

I. The Priest's Contrition

1. We have to preach contrition, and to preach it as the fruit of the Cross. How can we do this unless we are ourselves identified with the heart of Jesus bearing the sin of the world and suffering on the Cross? Only in His sacred heart, in His attitude towards sin and sorrow for it, can we learn what our sorrow ought to be, or attain to any measure of what it ought to be. And if we do not sorrow for our own sins, how can we move others to sorrow? We may preach of penitence and the Cross, but the words are lifeless unless our own hearts feel the sorrow of contrition. We cannot, we dare not, speak to others of sorrow for sin,

and of Jesus as the Saviour of sinners, unless we put ourselves in the front rank and say, with S. Paul, 'Of whom I am chief' (1 *Tim.* i. 15).

2. Are we tempted to think our ministry a failure, and to lay the blame on the hard hearts of our people, or on our circumstances, or on the state of the Church? No, these are not the real causes of failure. The real cause is in ourselves, our want of contrition. Instead of complaining of others and wondering that the Church effects so little, we ought to wonder that it effects what it does, seeing what we are—our lack of penitence, our feeble desire for holiness, how far we are living below our calling, how little we represent Christ to our people, or speak to them with His voice.

3. We lament because we have not certain gifts or outward means, which we think would bring success. Our Lord laments because He sees us hankering after such things and putting our trust in them, as if they were the real sources of power. He laments because He sees us trying to do His work without contrition, with hearts not really purified in His Blood, with so little love for Himself. Many a sermon has failed because it was not the outcome of a penitent heart. If we are to win others to sorrow for sin, we must ourselves know what sorrow for sin is. Oh, let us pray for a deep sense of our sins, for true contrition, that realizing how much we have been forgiven we may love much. Then, with a free heart and out of our own experience, we shall be able to speak to others of penitence, and lead them to the Cross, where we ourselves have learnt the power of the cleansing Blood.

II. The Priest's Confession

1. If every confession should be the expression of contrite love, how much more the priest's confession! How was it with my first confession? Was it the best, the fullest, the most contrite I could then make? How has it been with my confessions since? Have they grown in depth, or have they become superficial and formal, made out of mere

routine, without sorrow, without love, without the longing to rise out of sin into real holiness of life?

2. How do my confessions compare with those of devout penitents I hear? Even if my sins should appear less than those of some of my penitents, yet are they not aggravated far beyond them by my priesthood? Sins which may seem comparatively small in lay people may be very serious in priests. If we realize our association with the great High Priest, and how our sins grieve Him and hinder the work He would do through us, shall we not feel the burden of every sin, even the smallest, and long to confess everything with deep humility and contrite love? Shall we be content to say little, and slur over much? No; if we have true contrition we shall desire to say all, to open our whole hearts to our Lord, that the Precious Blood may cleanse every slightest stain of sin, and renew in us whatever has been decayed—and especially so in times of retreat. A retreat confession should be something more than our ordinary confessions. It should go deeper to the roots of sin. It should be the outcome of an intense desire to give ourselves to God in real holiness of life.

3. Again, as to the frequency of our confession: shall we be satisfied with coming only now and then at long intervals, making excuse that we have little to say, or that we have no suitable confessor near at hand? Rather let us remember that in every priest we can find the ear of Jesus to hear us, and the voice of Jesus to give us absolution. And for most of us confession is so accessible. We can find a priest within easy reach, or at the cost of only a short journey and the sacrifice of a little time. If we are truly penitent we shall not let trifles hinder us.

III. The Priest's Satisfaction

1. What is it we look for in making our confession? Is it merely to get rid of the burden and disquiet of our conscience? What we ought to look for and desire with all our hearts is a sanctified life—to rise after each absolution to a higher degree of spiritual life, a more entire surrender of ourselves to God, a more perfect following of our vocation.

2. We must desire, also, to make some satisfaction for our sins. When absolution has been given and our penance performed, all is not over and done. A new life has begun, or an impaired life has been renewed. We must show our gratitude. We must watch against relapse. We must rise to newness of life. We must show forth our thankfulness not only with our lips, but in our lives. We must live to the glory of God. At times it is good to add some voluntary penance, something that will touch the roots of sin, something that will be a real mortification of self, by means of which we may rise to a truer participation of the life of Christ, in the power of which we are called to live.

3. At the same time our penitence must not be selfish. The thought of our own sin must not engross or imprison us. Jesus is indeed our own personal Saviour, wholly our own, but not ours alone. His whole suffering heart and atoning love are for every one ; and we cannot enter into the fellowship of His heart without suffering for all for whom He suffers. Therefore we must practise penance and mortification not for ourselves only, but for our people, for the whole Church, for all who sin against God or neglect to serve Him.

4. If our penitence were such as this, what new power and joy there would be in our life and work ! We should not then have to complain that our people were unresponsive. We should see them moved to penitence by the evident fruits of penitence in us. We should have boldness to speak of penitence and the Cross, and to proclaim the gospel of salvation as never before, because we had realized it all in our own experience.

So let us meditate upon the penitence which befits the priest : his contrition, his confession, his satisfaction. Let us think what our own penitence has been, what it is now, what it ought to be. And let us pray that we may have an abiding, ever-deepening sorrow for sin ; that we may make our confessions with all that contrite love, all that hatred of sin, and desire to rise out of it into real holiness of life, which the calling and work of a priest demand.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxv.

THE PRIEST'S DEATH

PREL. i. Think of your own death, and what kind of life you will then wish that you had lived.

Prel. ii. Pray for a holy and peaceful death.

'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement' (*Heb.* ix. 27). Death is certain: it may be nearer than I think. How shall I meditate upon it? How prepare for it? Let me think of it first as,

I. THE END OF OPPORTUNITY

'The night cometh, when no man can work' (*S John* ix. 4). I have seen others die. I have watched the life flickering out, and then seen the breathing stop, and the body lie motionless upon the bed. One day, perhaps not so very far off, I shall pass through that experience myself. As I enter into it what shall I think of my life then, its opportunities, and its failures?

I shall realize then the proportion between things done and things left undone. I shall find myself then unable to care any longer for many secular interests which were once so absorbing, and on which I spent so much time that might have been given to prayer, meditation, study, and pastoral work. These opportunities have been lost and will not return. The work done and the work left undone are registered for ever. If any souls might have been helped, and I neglected them; might have been instructed, and I did not take the trouble; might have been saved, and I made no effort to reach them: then I must bear the burden of my failure. For me the night will have come in which I can no longer work, however much I may wish, too late, to do so.

Will it not be wise to ask now what I shall then wish I had done about these, and many other matters?

Shall I not wish that I had lived more simply, thought less of the gratification of the senses, learned to know something of the blessing which our Lord has pronounced upon the poor, been more detached from the world and worldly

things? 'O how great a confidence shall he have at the hour of death, whom no affection to any earthly thing detaineth in the world' (*Imitation of Christ*, III. liii. 2).

Shall I not wish that I had taken more pains with my own soul, with my repentance, my prayers; that I had lived in closer intimacy with God? 'My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever' (*Ps.* lxxiii. 25). O my God, teach me so to live now, that when I come to die such words may be the true utterance of a heart that has known and trusted Thee. 'Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace' (*Job* xxii. 21). 'Love Him,' says Thomas à Kempis, 'keep Him for thy friend, who, when all else fails, will not forsake thee, nor suffer thee to perish in the end' (*Imitation of Christ*, II. vii. 1).

Or my work. Shall I not wish that I had done it more faithfully, more seriously, more for God? Henry Martyn tells us in his diary of the effect produced upon him by an afternoon's visiting in a parish. 'What then on my death-bed of all these opportunities of warning sinners? O may the Lord seal upon my soul such a compassionate sense of their danger, that I may never have a heart to talk triflingly with them.' Let me ask for myself that I may bring the salt of a holy purpose into all my intercourse with others.

I shall wish, again, that I had been more patient and submissive to God's will in little things; that I had taken Christ's yoke upon me more simply and constantly; that through daily bearing the Cross I had died more completely to self and to the world. 'For a perfect contempt of the world; a fervent desire of advancing in virtues; the love of discipline, the toil of penance; the readiness of obedience; the denial of self; and the endurance of all adversities for the love of Christ, will give us great assurance of a happy death' (*Imitation of Christ*, I. xxiii. 4).

II. The Close of Stewardship

We are 'ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God' (1 *Cor.* iv. 1). Death is the close of stewardship, and stewardship implies accountability.

There are two qualities which our Lord speaks of as belonging to a good steward, *faithfulness* and *wisdom*. 'Who then is a faithful and wise steward, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?' (*S. Matt.* xxiv. 45). Let me think of these two qualities:

Faithfulness. 'It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful' (1 *Cor.* iv. 2). Faithful in teaching. Am I faithful in declaring the whole counsel of God, or do I hesitate about some part of it because it is unpopular? Faithful in ministering the doctrine, sacraments, and discipline of Christ, according to my ordination promise? Faithful in dealing with all in my parish, the sick and the whole? Faithful in study of the Scriptures, and such studies as help to the knowledge of the same?

Wisdom. A priest's work is very difficult. As a steward of the mysteries of God he has to give to each his portion of meat in due season, i.e. he must adapt his teaching to the various needs of those whom he has to instruct, and he must exercise discretion in admitting them to the sacraments. A great question for a steward of the mysteries of God at the end of his life will be, Have I wasted my Lord's goods by pouring them out indiscriminately? Or, on the other hand, Have I been too rigorous and ungenerous in dispensing them? Have I been wanting in wisdom, discernment, discretion? So let me ask for wisdom. It is the gift of God. 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not' (*S. Jas.* i. 5).

III. The Last Act of Self-Surrender

Death will be the last act of self-surrender to God, and the way to prepare for it is to give myself to God day by day in all I have to do or to suffer.

Think of our Lord's words on the Cross, 'It is finished.' 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit' (*S. John* xix. 30; *S. Luke* xxiii. 46). It was the summing up of the works which His Father had given Him to do, the end of a life of perfect obedience. So, to do and to bear what is laid upon me, what each day and hour brings as its appointed

task—to do this in obedience and as unto God, is the best preparation for death.

I am called day by day, in action or in suffering, to surrender my own will to the will of God ; to seek not my own ends but the end for which I was created, the love and service of God ; to dedicate all that I am and have to the glory of God and the extension of His kingdom ; to lose my own life by merging it in the larger life and purpose of God. I am called to this daily self-surrender, and death when it comes will be but the last act of it. It will be, as Bishop Wilson says, ' the completion of the Christian's sacrifice ' ; and the way to prepare for it is to perfect my daily actions, to do all for God, to recognize His will and providence in all, to yield in everything to Him.

So meditate on death : the end of opportunity ; the close of stewardship ; the last act of self-surrender.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxiii.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

PREL. i. S. John i. 35–37.

Prel. ii. Contemplate our Lord as He walks by the river Jordan. He walks in silence ; but His presence speaks to prepared hearts. He attracts them by a mysterious supernatural power. Two of those who behold Him are drawn to follow. As we behold Him, we feel that we must follow too.

Prel. iii. Pray for grace not to be deaf to this mysterious call, but prompt and diligent to obey.

I. THE CALL OF JESUS

Our Lord has returned from His long fast and temptation in the wilderness. He comes again to the Jordan, where He had been baptized by John, and the Voice from heaven had proclaimed Him as the beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased. He has been anointed with the Holy Ghost as the great Captain of our salvation (*Heb.* ii. 10), and now He is about to open the campaign.

He has met and measured the power of the enemy. He knows the hold which Satan has upon the world, and the hardness and the length of the conflict. But He knows also the certainty of the issue, and the glory which will follow.

And as He looks around and on into the future, and back into the distant past, and contemplates all the generations of men who ever have lived or shall live, and sees how sin has multiplied and spread, how the whole world lies ' in the evil one ' (1 *S. John* v. 19), and multitudes are dying and going down into hell, His sacred heart is filled with pity, and an infinite desire to save them. He has come to bear witness to the Father's love ; to be the Saviour of the world ; to offer Himself a sacrifice for sin ; to die upon the Cross and to rise again, in order to impart a new life to this mass of corrupt and dead humanity.

But in order to carry out His purpose and realize the desire of His heart, He has need of others who will help

Him. According to the plan of His divine providence He must send others as He Himself is sent by the Father. That is why He called and sent His Apostles. That is why He has called and sent me.

How have I answered to His call? How have I fulfilled my mission? What answer shall I make to Him as He calls me now afresh in my retreat? Ponder these questions and the answers to be made to them, and in your colloquy pray again that you may not be deaf to His call, but prompt and diligent to obey.

II. The Work to which He calls us

It is to carry on His own work; to bear witness to the truth; to glorify God; to save souls.

1. Christ bore witness to the truth. 'For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth' (*S. John* xviii. 37)—the truth about God and His redeeming love, about holiness and sin, the world and its vanity, life and death, heaven and hell. This truth has power to set men free from bondage to the world, the flesh, and the devil, if they will receive it and act upon it. 'The truth shall make you free' (*S. John* viii. 32). To bear witness to this truth Christ calls us; and those that are 'of the truth' will hear our voice as they heard His.

2. Christ glorified the Father. 'I have glorified Thee on the earth' (*S. John* xvii. 4). It was not only by what He said and did that He glorified God, but even more by what He was and what He suffered. So with us. God is not glorified by anything that we do in our own strength, whatever good it may seem to effect for the moment, and however it may win the praise of men. He is glorified by our dying to self and to the world; by our hidden life of patience and endurance; by the development of the life of Christ within us. It is the life of Christ within us which really glorifies God, and bears witness to the world.

3. It is by this witness of the reality of the life of Christ within us that we are to carry forward our Lord's work of saving souls. No soul can be saved except by faith in

Christ, and union with Him. Salvation is the acceptance of supernatural life in Christ. 'He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life' (1 *S. John* v. 12). And it is for us priests to bring this life near to others and manifest its reality to the world, because we are living in its power ourselves. Only so can our ministry be a ministry of life awakening dead souls to a consciousness of the supernatural life which is in Christ, and which they are invited to share by incorporation into Him.

III. The Conditions of our Work

They are the same as those under which our Lord lived and worked. He laid aside His glory. He humbled Himself. He came in poverty and outward weakness. He endured hunger, and thirst, and cold, and weariness. He suffered shame, and scorn, and blasphemy. He was despised and rejected of men, and crucified at last by those whom He had come to save. His life seemed in the sight of men to be a failure; but out of that apparent failure came the triumph, the glory of the Father, the power which from that day to this has drawn countless souls from death to life. 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me' (*S. John* xii. 32).

It must be the same with us. In no other way can we carry on Christ's work. As He was in this world, so also must we be. Like Him we must be content to be poor and weak in this world's wealth and power that we may be filled with the true riches, possessing all things in Him, and finding His strength made perfect through our weakness. Like Him we must be prepared to be scorned and rejected by the world. Like Him we must endure outward hardness, and inward sorrows and disappointments. Like Him we must be able by faith to hold on through seeming failure and defeat, sure of the ultimate victory, and the glory which is to follow.

We must not be surprised if many refuse to hear our message. It was so with our Lord Himself. How few of those to whom He preached followed Him, and persevered in following! So we shall have many disappointments.

Many will refuse to hear our message, or having listened and followed for a time, will turn back. We must not lose heart because of this. We are responsible only for bearing our witness to the truth and love of God, by our lives, our words, our example, our love, our diligence, our sufferings. We must see that what we say, both from the pulpit and in all our intercourse with our people, is the true voice of Christ speaking in and through us. Then Christ's sheep will hear His voice in us, and will follow Him. 'All that the Father giveth Me,' says our Lord, 'shall come to Me' (*S. John* vi. 37). So we may be sure that if we are true to Christ ourselves, our ministry will not be fruitless. It will accomplish that which God intends to work through us. Let us not be discouraged. If we do our best, we can leave results to God.

These are the conditions of our work. To the natural heart they seem but so many tokens of weakness and of failure; but faith sees in them the pledge of certain triumph. For they are the conditions under which our Lord, the great Captain of our salvation, lived, and suffered, and triumphed; and therefore they are the only conditions under which we can really participate in that continuation of His life and work to which He calls us. The Cross, with all that it means of poverty, and shame, and weakness, and seeming failure, is still, and always will be, 'the power of God unto salvation' (*Rom.* i. 16).

Meditate thus upon the call of Christ, the work to which He calls us, and the conditions under which it has to be carried on, if it is to be truly a work of Christ. Pray that you may have a deeper understanding of the supernatural character of the work, and also faith to accept the conditions under which it must be carried on, in spite of the paradoxes which they present to the natural judgement. 'The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men' (1 *Cor.* i. 25).

Imitation of Christ, I. i; II. i; III. lvi.

THE HUMILITY OF THE INCARNATION

S. Bernard distinguishes between *the truth* and *the virtue* of humility. The truth enlightens the mind; the virtue inflames the heart and will. Philosophy may teach us the truth of our nothingness; but the virtue of humility is much more than this. It has its seat in the heart and is learnt from Christ. Jesus Christ is the true Teacher of this, and every other virtue.

Prel. i. Our Lord saying to His disciples, 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls' (*S. Matt.* xi. 29).

Prel. ii. Pray for a love of humility, and that you may learn it in the heart of Jesus.

I. Our Lord the Perfect Model of Humility

1. In the mystery of the Incarnation. 'The Word was made flesh' (*S. John* i. 14). He took not on Him the nature of angels, though that would have been an infinite condescension, but the seed of Abraham. He was made man. And still further, He took our nature in the weakness and humiliation of its fallen condition, subject to weariness, hunger and thirst, temptation, suffering of body and soul, and death. He came 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' (*Rom.* viii. 3), 'in all things like unto His brethren' (*Heb.* ii. 17), only without sin.

2. Think also of S. Paul's statement of this mystery: 'Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize [or thing to be clung to] to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross' (*Phil.* ii. 5–8). He 'emptied Himself,' not of His divine nature. That was

impossible. But He divested Himself of His rightful dignity and glory, taking 'the form of a servant,' and still further humbling Himself as man, by obedience unto death, even the death of the Cross.

Here are two points for our meditation : (*a*) Jesus the model of humility in His Incarnation ; (*b*) Jesus the model of humility through the whole course of His earthly life, from His birth at Bethlehem to His death on the Cross. He chose to be born in poverty and obscurity, to live and labour as a poor man, to be despised and rejected, scorned, spit upon, scourged, crucified. And in all this amazing humiliation, we are to be like Him. 'Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.'

II. The Excellence of Humility

1. *In itself* : it is truth, justice, and the foundation of all other virtues.

(*a*) *Humility is truth.* It teaches us the truth about ourselves, about creatures, about God. The angels sinned through pride. They 'abode not in the truth' (*S. John* viii. 44), i.e. they abode not in humility. Falling from humility they fell under the dominion of falsehood.

Pride brings us also under the dominion of falsehood. We think ourselves to be something when we are nothing. We think the world and the things of the world to be the great realities, when they are nothing but emptiness and vanity. Pride blinds us to their real nothingness. Satan is always trying to bring us under this dominion of falsehood. He would have us make ourselves the centre and measure of all things ; he would make the world and what it has to offer appear the only real goods. So we make idols of ourselves, and of the creatures.

Against this deception humility is our safeguard. It teaches us the truth about ourselves, the world, and God. It reveals to us our own nothingness ; the emptiness and insecurity of the world ; the will of God as the only true object of our life.

(*b*) *Humility is justice.* It will not take to itself the honour which belongs to another. In whatever gifts we

have or good we do, it leads us to give God the glory, to know and acknowledge that in ourselves 'dwelleth no good thing' (*Rom.* vii. 18); that at best we are but unprofitable servants (*S. Luke* xvii. 10); that whatever we have is not of ourselves, but the gift of God (1 *Cor.* iv. 7).

(*c*) *Humility is the foundation of all other virtues.* S. Gregory says 'he who treasures up other virtues without humility does nothing but throw dust before the wind; the first puff blows all away,' 'You aspire to great things,' says S. Augustine, 'begin with little ones; you desire to erect a very high building, think first of the foundation of humility. The foundations are always sunk proportionately to the intended height and weight of the building.'

2. *In its effects.* Humility will bring with it grace, peace, and true glory:

(*a*) *Grace*; for God 'resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble' (1 *S. Pet.* v. 5). Humility makes it possible for God to give what pride cannot receive. The Blessed Virgin was the humblest among women, therefore she was highly favoured, full of grace (*S. Luke* i. 28). And this fullness of grace made her more humble still: 'He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden' (ibid. i. 48). When grace is given to the really humble soul it always increases humility. Thus grace perfects and deepens humility. It is the consciousness of the divine life in us that will make and keep us most truly humble.

(*b*) *Humility brings peace.* 'Be desirous, my son, to do the will of another rather than thine own. Choose always to have less rather than more. Seek always the lower place, and to be under all. Wish always, and pray, that the will of God may be wholly fulfilled in thee. Behold, such a man entereth within the borders of peace and quiet' (*Imitation of Christ*, III. xxiii). If we had courage to act upon this doctrine how soon we should enter into peace!

(*c*) *Humility brings true glory.* So it was with our Lord; 'He humbled Himself . . . wherefore also God hath highly exalted Him,' etc. (*Phil.* ii. 8–11). So it has been with all the saints. They were humble, they endured humiliations, they humbled themselves, therefore God exalted them; if

not in the sight of men, at least in the sight of angels ; if not on earth, yet now in heaven.

III. Humility especially Necessary for Priests

1. The higher our vocation and our work, the more shall we be exposed to the assaults of pride and vanity. Our self-love will tempt us to attribute the good we do to ourselves. Others will flatter us. The devil will seek to inspire thoughts of pride, for he knows that pride will ruin all we do, and make us his slaves. Humility is our safeguard : ' Love humility and thou shalt never be caught in the snares of the devil ' (*S. Ephraem*).

2. Humility is necessary in our work of winning souls. It is not cleverness, or argument, or brilliant gifts, or force of will, that wins souls for Christ. For nature resists nature; the natural powers of a man instinctively rise in self-defence, refusing to yield to what is no greater or more sovereign than ourselves. Hearts will only yield to God. And God can only work through those who are really humble. All that is of self, all that ministers to pride and self-importance, only hinders God's power. It acts like a non-conductor, checking the current of His grace which would otherwise pass through us to others. We must be humble, emptied of self, depending on God, if we are to be instruments of His grace.

Let us pray, then, for this virtue of humility. We shall love it, and taste its sweetness, and know its power, if we seek it in the heart of Jesus.

Imitation of Christ, III. iv, vii, viii, xiii.

THE MINISTERIAL LIFE OF OUR LORD

PREL. i. S. Matthew ix. 35.

Prel. ii. Think of the ceaseless labours of our Lord's ministerial life, teaching, healing the sick, multitudes following and pressing around Him, constant calls upon His sympathy and help.

Prel. iii. Pray for grace to spend and be spent for your people.

In so vast a subject we can only single out a few leading features for our meditation now. Consider then :

I. HIS ZEAL FOR GOD AND FOR SOULS

1. Think first of that which was the foundation of it, viz. His life of union with God and of constant prayer.

His human soul was always looking up to God, always abiding in Him. Thus it was replenished with a constant inflowing of divine light and love. The love of God was always flooding His human soul, and passing on through it to men.

If we are to do our work in the spirit of Jesus we must share in this activity of His soul. We must seek to have our hearts filled with the same divine love which burned in His. This must be the foundation of all our ministerial work.

2. Think of His sense of the value of each individual soul ; see the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin (*S. Luke* xv. 1–10).

3. Think of His watchfulness for opportunities. Again and again in the Gospels we seem to see Him putting Himself in the way of those who needed His help ; not merely ready to receive them, but going after them and Himself making the opportunity (*S. John* iv. 5–26 ; v. 1–9, 14 ; *S. Mark* x. 46–52 ; *S. Luke* xix. 1–10 ; *S. Matt.* xx. 30–34).

So must we be watchful for opportunities and contrive them. If we pray for our people, opportunities will be given

and we shall find ourselves able to use them. Unless we pray we shall often fail to recognize opportunities when they are given. Or if we do recognize them we shall not be in the right spiritual attitude to use them.

4. Think how accessible He was; how He put Himself at the disposal of all who came to Him, never repelling them, or putting them off, e.g. Nicodemus, who came to Him by night (*S. John* iii. 1, 2); the woman who was a sinner, breaking in upon Him at a banquet (*S. Luke* vii. 36–38); Jairus, interrupting His discourse (*S. Matt.* ix. 18).

5. Or think again how our Lord never spared Himself. What a life of ceaseless toil!—teaching, preaching, healing, journeying, 'many coming and going, . . . no leisure so much as to eat' (*S. Mark* vi. 31).

So we shall have many demands made upon us, often when we are tired, or at inconvenient times. It is only the love of God and of souls, gained by prayer, that will enable us to respond to these demands.

6. Think too of the purity of intention in all our Lord's work. He never sought His own glory, nor the praise of men. One thing alone He desired, to do the will of His Father, and to finish the work given Him to do (*S. John* iv. 34; viii. 50; xvii. 4).

Compare your zeal with this, and see how far it is like our Lord's—a zeal full of love, prayerful, watchful, unsparing, and pure in its intention.

II. His Gentleness and Charity

1. Always calm and equable. If ever He showed anger it was at hypocrisy or wilful wrong-doing, never at injustice or injury to Himself.

2. Always kind and courteous. He never received any one grudgingly or repelled him harshly. Rather He drew all to Himself by His gentleness and sweetness.

3. Always patient and forbearing, enduring the contradiction of sinners, bearing with the ignorant and rude.

Have I begun to learn these virtues? In the life of a priest there will always be much need to practise them,

especially patience and forbearance. We have to live and work with persons of very various temperaments and characters, sometimes with those who are difficult and trying. Where shall we find help but in the unwearied patience and charity of our Lord? Meditate often upon it, and upon S. Paul's description of charity in 1 Corinthians xiii. What a power to win souls there will be in a priest whose heart is full of this divine charity! How it will disarm suspicion, break down prejudice, and prepare the way for our Lord to find an entrance into hearts long closed against Him!

III. His Firmness and Courage in meeting Difficulties and Opposition

1. This is sometimes not realized as it should be. He was meek and gentle, but He showed also courage in its highest forms. Not physical courage only, though He showed that, but the highest forms of moral courage.

The highest form of courage that we can imagine is that of one, who clearly foreseeing the final issue of the course he must take, e.g. that it will alienate the sympathy of those he loves, that it will cause him to be misunderstood and misrepresented by almost every one, and that it will lead to the overthrow of all earthly hopes, perhaps even to death, yet continues unwavering and steadfast on his course.

That was the courage of our Lord, who persevered though His relations thought Him mad, though His disciples misunderstood Him, though the rulers of His people opposed and persecuted Him, till at last, when His life seemed to be closing in apparently complete failure, He could speak the word of unhesitating triumph, 'I have overcome the world' (*S. John* xvi. 33). This was courage combined, in a way never seen before, with a meekness and willingness to suffer wrong, and a refusal to assert for Himself His divine power, which might have swept away all opposition with a word.

2. In the work of the ministry there are many difficulties to be met and overcome, difficulties in those we have to deal with, in ourselves, in our circumstances.

There will be disappointments also. Some will only harden their hearts. Others will fall away. Our Lord had

to meet this trial also. 'Many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him' (*S. John* vi. 66).

He had to meet envy and hatred also. He was slandered and misrepresented. They tried to catch Him in His words. They made false accusations (*S. Mark* xii. 13; xiv. 56; xv. 10; *S. John* vii. 7; xv. 24).

But no difficulties, no calumnies, no opposition ever stopped Him or turned Him from His mission.

To human judgement His work might seem to have utterly failed. How few of those who heard Him followed Him! We think of the little band of disciples gathered together after the Crucifixion, 'The number of names together were about an hundred and twenty' (*Acts* i. 15). Only that as the fruit of such a ministry! But that little band had the promise of the future. They were the seed which was to grow into the Catholic Church.

So let us be strong in faith and courageous in perseverance. We may have to meet much opposition and see little fruit of our work. But if it has been done in a spirit of self-sacrifice, and faith, and prayer, it cannot fail to bear fruit. Not perhaps fruit which we shall live to see; the harvest may come after we are gone; others may enter into our labours and reap where we have sown. But what then? We shall have our full reward. We with them shall 'rejoice together' (*S. John* iv. 36).

So let us pray our Lord to kindle in our hearts the fire of a holy zeal for His glory and the salvation of souls; and to give us along with it gentleness, charity, patience, perseverance, faith, and courage

Imitation of Christ, I. xvi; III. xxxvi, xlvi.

OUR LORD THE TEACHER OF PRAYER

PREL. i. 'It came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray' (*S. Luke* xi. 1).

Prel. ii. Contemplate our Lord in prayer, as His disciples must often have seen Him.

Prel. iii. Make their request your own, 'Lord, teach me to pray.'

I. OUR LORD'S LIFE OF PRAYER

1. From all eternity the Divine Word was ever abiding in the contemplation of the Father, and returning to Him in the utterance of responsive love. This utterance of the eternal Word could not cease when He became incarnate. The human soul of Jesus was ever uttering itself to God in adoration, love, and self-oblation. This was His prayer, and it was continual. His soul was always in union with God. The busy life never interfered with this union. If the angels always contemplate God while sent forth to minister to man (*Heb.* i. 14), how much more must it have been so with the human soul of the Incarnate Son?

This may teach us something of the true nature of prayer. In its widest sense prayer is co-extensive with spiritual life—with the whole of the soul's intercourse with God, by which it lives. It is what breathing is to the bodily life.

So think of our Lord's prayer as a continual activity, the very life by which He lived in constant union with the Father.

2. And yet in our Lord's life on earth there were special times and seasons of prayer. 'In the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed' (*S. Mark* i. 35). Or He

would spend the whole night in prayer (*S. Luke* vi. 12 ; *S. Matt.* xiv. 23). Or, again, He would call His disciples apart, as it were into retreat with Himself (*S. Mark* vi. 31).

So we may think of our Lord's prayer, His constant prayer of contemplation ; His retirement for prayer, early in the morning, or at night ; His going apart in retreat alone or with His disciples.

And as we think of what His prayer must have been, do we not feel our need to be taught by Him to pray : ' Lord, teach us to pray ' ?

II. He Teaches us by His Example

1. It was the sight of Him engaged in prayer which moved the disciples to ask Him to teach them. There must have been something very striking and inspiring in the sight. It must have filled them with a sense of great reality, great reverence, great love. These at least He teaches us by His example.

Some may catch glimpses of something beyond this, something more mysterious and divine, something that recalls the Transfiguration, an unearthly light upon His countenance, a glory round about Him, an ecstasy which raised His body from the earth. How often such things may have been the accompaniment of His prayer we do not know.

For most often His prayer was in private—in solitary places, on the mountain top. ' He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed ' (*S. Luke* v. 16). This was not once only. All in the Greek speaks of repeated occasions. The withdrawals were repeated, ἦν ὑποχωρῶν, He was wont to withdraw ; and in desert places, ἐν ταῖς ἐρήμοις, the desert places were more than one. The prayers were habitual, καὶ προσευχόμενος. So by His example He teaches us that besides that constant spirit of contemplation in which He lived, and in which we are called to live, we need also set times and seasons for prolonged exercises of prayer, such as our daily meditation and our recurring retreats.

2. Again, by His example, He teaches us to be fervent and persevering in prayer, to pray on through times of spiritual darkness, desolation, and temptation. Behold Him in Gethsemane. Time after time He returns to His prayer. 'Being in an agony He prayed more earnestly,' His sweat 'as it were great drops of blood' (*S. Luke* xxii. 44), His soul 'exceeding sorrowful unto death' (*S. Mark* xiv. 34).

3. And resignation. 'If this cup may not pass away, except I drink it, Thy will be done' (*S. Matt.* xxvi. 42). Our Lord submits His human will to the will of His Father. Submission, union of our will with the will of God, is the consummation of prayer, and the true way of inward peace. 'In His will is our peace' (Dante, *Par.* iii. 85).

III. He Teaches us by Word

In answer to the request of His disciples, 'Lord, teach us to pray,' He taught them the 'Our Father.'

Think what it is to have a form of prayer given us by our Lord Himself, the authentic utterance of His own lips. How sure we may be that it contains, at least in outline, all that is needful for us to ask, and all arranged in the right order and proportion. From the order of its petitions we learn what things we should pray for first, 'Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done.' Thus our thoughts are raised up to the contemplation of God, His glory, His purposes. These are the things which were the constant desire of the heart of Jesus.

May it not be that one reason why our prayers are often so cold and lifeless is that we are thinking too much of ourselves? The thought of God in all His perfections, the longing for the coming of His kingdom and the perfect fulfilment of His will, would tend to set us free from self and bring us into a larger, freer atmosphere; would help us to pray more as our Lord prayed, would develop within us more of the mind of Christ.

It would be good from time to time to meditate upon this divine rule of prayer, so as to learn to pray according to its teaching; using it both as a form of prayer, and also as a model for all our other prayers.

IV. He Teaches us Inwardly by His Holy Spirit

Prayer is a supernatural activity. It is the movement of the Spirit of Jesus in our souls. Fallen nature has neither the right nor the power to approach God in prayer. Even in the covenanted worship of the Jewish Church there was the veil of separation, teaching man to remember his outcast condition. The means of access to God under the old covenant were only typical.

Therefore when our Lord promised the gift of the Holy Ghost, He spoke also of a new efficacy and power that would be given to prayer. 'In that day ye shall ask in My Name' (*S. John* xvi. 26). Now, in the power of the Spirit, we can pray, not as outcasts in our fallen nature, but as true sons by regeneration. Identified with Christ as His members, His voice fills our utterance with all the authority and claim belonging to Himself.

This is the supernatural prayer which Jesus, our Lord, will teach those who come to Him to be taught. 'Lord, teach us to pray,' to pray in the power of this divine sonship, not as slaves but as children. Teach us the things to pray for according to Thy will. Teach us so to pray for them that Thy Spirit may pray within us. These are the things we long to be taught. None but Thou canst teach us this kind of prayer. It cannot be learnt from human instruction. It needs a living personal Teacher, who can enter into the inmost recesses of our being, and knows the difficulties and needs of each. And Thou only, my God, canst do this. Therefore, Lord, teach us, teach me—oh surely Thou wilt do it—teach me to pray.

So let us come day by day in our prayer to be taught by Jesus. Let us believe that He is ready to teach us, as truly as He taught His Apostles. Let us be sure that there is nothing He wants to teach us more than this, and nothing we more need to learn. For if we know how to pray, and are faithful to our practice of prayer, all else in our life will come right, and our work will be fruitful to the glory of God.

Imitation of Christ, III. i, ii; IV. xv.

THE PASSION OF JESUS

As we contemplate the sufferings of our Lord, we must be careful not to contemplate them as if they belonged only to the past history of this lower world. The Passion of Christ is not merely an historic memory awakening our compassion and our gratitude, and stimulating us to follow the example He has left us : it is a present centre of supernatural grace and power. We must penetrate through its sorrowful exterior to its mysterious glory. It is while we live in the contemplation of this glory that we shall find the living power of the Passion, which otherwise is apt to crumble away into empty phraseology or petty and puerile devotions, all unworthy of Him who suffered.

Prel. i. Christ our Lord dying and dead upon the Cross.

Prel. ii. Pray for grace to enter into the real meaning and glory of the Passion, so as to experience its quickening power.

I. Christ our Sacrifice

Contemplate Jesus Christ crucified, as the 'one, full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.'

This sacrifice had its origin in the eternal love and 'tender mercy' of God, who gave His 'only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption.' 'By' this 'one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are being sanctified' (*Heb.* x. 14). 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin' (1 *S. John* i. 7). 'In Him we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of His grace' (*Eph.* i. 7).

Bring each sin of which conscience accuses you to the Cross. Pray not only that the sins may be forgiven, but that the wounds they have left upon your soul may be healed by the life-giving blood which flows from the wounds of Jesus ; so that they may no longer hinder your correspondence with grace, and with whatever purpose God may have for you.

Dwell with thankfulness on God's 'inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.' 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself' (2 *Cor.* v. 19). In that reconciliation, through the mercy of God, I have my part.

How this should awaken love and gratitude in my heart! How it should constrain me to give myself wholly to Him who gave Himself so unreservedly for me! How can I hold back anything which Love demands?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

O Love, I give myself to Thee,
Thine ever, only Thine to be.

II. Christ our Example

'Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps' (1 *S. Pet.* ii. 21).

Contemplate this example: the humility, meekness, patience, charity, obedience, and courage, of our Lord in His Passion.

Contrast your pride and ambition with His humility.

Your anger and impatience with His meekness, gentleness, and charity.

Your softness and love of luxury with His poverty and simplicity.

Your sloth with His zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Think of your own cowardice and shrinking from the Cross, and ponder our Lord's words, 'He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me,' 'cannot be My disciple' (*S. Matt.* x. 38; *S. Luke* xiv. 27).

Pray that you may count all else 'but refuse that you may gain Christ, and be found in Him' (*Phil.* iii. 8, 9, R.V.).

Think how often you are influenced by human respect and fear of man's judgement, and meditate upon our Lord's words, 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He

cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels' (*S. Mark* viii. 38).

Think of your inconsiderateness for others, your impatience with their timidity and slowness, your rash judgements of them, and want of sympathy with their difficulties. Compare this with the gentleness and patience of our Lord throughout His life, and especially in His Passion.

There is a wonderful power in this contemplation of the sacred humanity of our Lord to transform our hearts into His likeness. An hour, or half an hour, of devout contemplation of His obedience, His patience, His humility, His love of suffering, His courage and endurance, will change our poor nature for the better more effectually than many days of striving to practise these virtues unaccompanied by such contemplation. Thus the saints found, in prayer before the crucifix, their book, their mirror, their transformation.[1]

Remember the words of S. Ignatius, that 'Love ought to be placed in deeds rather than in words.'

Plant in my heart, O Lord Jesus, the memory, the love, the likeness of Thy Passion.

III. Christ our Life

Contemplate Christ crucified and risen, as a power within you:

In your memory, to keep you mindful of Him.
In your intellect, to enlighten it.
In your will, to strengthen it.
In your heart, to inflame it with love for Him.

In order to realize and use this power more fully:

1. Endeavour to cultivate a consciousness of union with Christ at all times. The practice of ejaculatory prayer and aspirations will greatly help in this. Speaking of such prayers Dr. Pusey says, 'Love often grows greatly through their frequent use. They feed its fire and gain more love from God than almost any other sort of prayer.'

2. Do all you can to strengthen that which binds you to Christ. Let His unspeakable love lead you to make

[1] See Bp. Hedley's *Retreat*, Discourse xii.

a continual response of love, doing and bearing all things for love of Him. Love grows by doing little things for love's sake.

3. Think of the dishonour done to Him by sin, your own and others', the wounding of His Sacred Heart, the grieving of the Holy Spirit (*Eph.* iv. 30).

4. Think of the blessedness of reparation, serving Christ with a keener, deeper love, in the thought of former neglect in yourself or in others.

5. Think of the honour of wearing His livery, sharing His reproach, 'accounting it greater riches than the treasures of Egypt' (*Heb.* xi. 26). 'If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you' (1 *S. Pet.* iv. 14).

So think of our Lord's Passion as a Sacrifice for our sins, an example for us to follow, and an indwelling power enabling us both to act and to suffer for His glory. In every suffering of the Passion He was developing in His sacred humanity grace to meet our needs; and as we look up to Him in faith, that grace will be poured into our feeble nature, and we shall be strong with a strength not our own, but His.

And not strong only, but joyful. Through all the sufferings of the Passion the Sacred Heart of Jesus was abiding in the joy of God, save for that brief space upon the Cross when He willed that the sense of the Divine Presence should be withdrawn from His human soul. In the strength of that joy He endured the Cross. Both the joy and the suffering were beyond what we can know, but even in us there is this capacity for joy in suffering. The joy may sometimes seem beyond us, too high, too far away; and yet have we not at times had some experience of it? Enough to make us sure that it is possible; that there really can be joy in suffering for Christ and with Christ, a joy which the Holy Spirit can enable us to experience in the consciousness of union with Him, who triumphed by the Cross, and will make us to triumph by it too.

Imitation of Christ, II. xi, xii.

THE SUPPER AT EMMAUS

PREL. i. S. Luke xxiv. 30, 31.

Prel. ii. Christ blessing and breaking the bread, and then vanishing out of sight.

Prel. iii. Pray that your eyes may be opened to contemplate the mystery and the glory of Christ's presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

I. THE BLESSING OF THE BREAD

Our Lord suffered Himself to be constrained to stay with the two disciples whom He had accompanied on the way. But having entered the house, He cannot suffer Himself to be with them in any other relation than that which truly belongs to Him. As they sit down to supper it is He who takes the place of the master and blesses the food. He is indeed the Host, and they the guests.

'He took the bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.' It is not likely that this was a celebration of the Holy Eucharist. These two disciples were not present at the institution on Maundy Thursday, and would not have recognized it as a repetition of what our Lord had then done. But it would seem to have had something of a sacramental character. At any rate we may think of it as meant to teach these two disciples the same truth that had been taught to the Apostles, viz. that it would be 'in the breaking of bread' that they would hereafter come to recognize their Master's presence.

So let us think what this mystery may teach us about His presence with us in Holy Communion.

'He brake and gave to them'; gave with His own hand as a gift from His very self. As we receive the Blessed Sacrament we ought to think of Christ as personally giving Himself to us. It is the same Jesus who blesses and breaks the Bread of Life now as it was then. He is still the Priest who gives, and what He gives is Himself. Gift and Giver are one.

How great will be the joy of the soul that really recognizes Jesus as the Master of the feast, and receives the gift as personally given by Him! At Cana the governor of the feast knew not whence the good wine came (*S. John* ii. 9). We ought to know whence the True Bread comes, and to receive it at the hands of our Lord with adoration and thanksgiving, as a personal gift of individual love.

II. The Opening of the Disciples' Eyes

The disciples did not at first understand the significance of what our Lord was doing, but they experienced the effect of what He gave them. 'Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.'

As we receive our Lord in Holy Communion we must not limit the greatness of the gift by our apprehension of it. What we receive is far beyond our understanding. Yet we must be ever longing to have the eyes of our hearts opened that we may know with fuller and more spiritual knowledge both the Giver and the Gift.

How is it that we receive our Lord so often and know Him so little? It is not our natural faculties that are at fault. Want of understanding does not hinder the efficacy of Divine gifts. The two disciples at Emmaus did not understand, yet their eyes were opened. Want of love, not lack of understanding, is what clouds the eye of the soul. We can only know our Lord in proportion as we love Him.

How great ought to be our love of Jesus after so many Communions! Oh, that our eyes were indeed opened to contemplate Him! How we ought to pray for this time after time as we receive Him!

Nor is the gift a mere transitory visitation. If we truly feed upon Him, He dwells in us abidingly. We may not always be conscious of His presence, but it is there, and we must try to call it into consciousness from time to time, by acts of faith, and love, and self-surrender. So must we cherish His presence, constraining Him to abide with us. Unless we do so, He cannot stay with us.

Think of the joy of the disciples when they recognized Jesus. This was He whom they had loved with a measure of natural love, owning Him as their Master. But now that

their eyes are opened, how greatly does His glory surpass their thoughts. They had thought of Him as 'a prophet mighty in deed and word,' and had hoped that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel' (*S. Luke* xxiv. 19, 21). They had been sad and dispirited because of His crucifixion. Now they behold Him returning from the grave, victorious over death; and great is their joy.

So, as we contemplate Jesus abiding within ourselves, we ought to experience a like joy. It is the risen, glorified Jesus who is within us; the Jesus who has passed through death, and is alive for evermore. We must not let our hearts lose the glow in which the two disciples realized this truth: 'Christ in us, the hope of glory' (*Col.* i. 27); the power in which we are to live now, and to rise in glory when He shall come again (*S. John* vi. 54).

III. Jesus Vanishing from their Sight

He vanishes, but He is not gone. He appeared not for a momentary surprise, but for an abiding reunion. Now they know Him better far than by any knowledge which the outward eye could give. They know that He is more truly with them by spiritual fellowship than He could ever be by visible proximity in space. They would not detain Him in their sight, even if they could.

What a consciousness of His unseen presence must they have gained from this revelation! His vanishing away does not destroy this consciousness; it intensifies it. If He had remained with them in visible presence, they would have known Him only after the flesh. As He vanishes, He draws them after Himself into the hidden world wherein He lives, and illuminates their hearts with the glory which is His own.

We, too, need to have our hearts lifted up in fellowship with our risen Lord, that we may know Him truly, and find that knowledge to be our life (*S. John* xvii. 3). 'Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we Him so no more' (2 *Cor.* v. 16). The knowledge of Christ after the flesh does not help to this higher knowledge of Him after the spirit. Our Lord had said, 'It is expedient for you that I go away' (*S. John* xvi. 7). The Apostles did not understand His words at the time. But

now these two disciples are learning their truth. He vanishes, but He is not really gone. At any moment, in any place, He may be near. Nay, at every moment He is near, and they know now the changeless love with which He is ever watching over them.

So this manifestation of the risen Saviour teaches us how He has passed beyond the limitations of earthly conditions, and can manifest Himself in any place, and under whatever form He pleases. In the Blessed Sacrament He comes to us under forms which the senses cannot penetrate. He is present, according to His promise, whether felt or unfelt. To be without the feeling of His presence is not necessarily to lose our hold of Him. Still less is it for Him to lose His hold of us. The hold which depends upon our feelings is very feeble and uncertain, but He holds us in the grasp of a love which makes us one with Him, as He is one with the Father (*S. John* vi. 57). And knowing this we can hold Him with the grasp of faith when feeling fails. Yet sometimes He makes His presence felt, and our eyes are opened, and our hearts burn within us, and we know Him with an assurance which is almost that of sight.

So, as we meditate upon this manifestation of the risen Lord and what it may teach us about His presence in the Blessed Sacrament, let us pray that the eyes of our hearts may indeed be opened to know Him in His truth. Let us ask Him to increase our faith and love, and to lift us up to thoughts more worthy of the greatness and the glory of His gift.

Imitation of Christ, IV. iii, iv.

THE BREATH OF THE RISEN LIFE

PREL. i. S. John xx. 19–23.

Prel. ii. The disciples are assembled for their evening meal. The doors are shut for security. Jesus appears in their midst (*S. John* xx. 19–23).

Prel. iii. Pray that you may know Him in the truth of His risen life, and experience in yourself its heavenly power.

I. THE SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER OF THE RISEN LIFE

1. Our Lord appears among His disciples. He is there without motion. He has passed away from the conditions of space and earthly locality. Any one point of space is as near to Him now as any other. He manifests Himself to their outward senses. His real presence is with them whether seen or unseen.

He stands erect, tranquil, self-sustained, elevating their hearts to the consciousness of a life no longer limited by earthly conditions, a life which has passed beyond the possibility of weariness or pain, or need of rest or food. The disciples thought they saw a spirit, and truly it was a spiritual body which they saw, but it was no phantom. It was a real body having ' flesh and bones ' (*S. Luke* xxiv. 39), a body that could be touched and felt, but existing now in a transformed and spiritual condition.

Thus we learn something of the nature of Christ's risen body. By His resurrection He has lifted up the material nature which He had assumed so as to act now in the fullness of spiritual power, to be the perfect instrument of His Divine will.

2. This risen life which fills the body of Jesus is not a mere personal possession. He has it in order to give it to others. So He breathed on His disciples and said, ' Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' This act of breathing would be com-

pleted in the fullness of power when He had ascended, but He begins to give the Spirit now, while still with them on earth.

It was not the breath of the natural life, but of the supernatural, the Breath, the Spirit, the Life of God. By this Divine breath the humanity of Jesus lives in glory, and by it the Church and all her members live and share, in a hidden mystery, the same glory.

So think of the supernatural character of the risen life in Christ the Head, and in all the members of His mystical body.

II. Our Lord's Joy in communicating this Life

1. Human nature finds a joy in every form of self-communication. The joy we feel ourselves we long to share with others. To share it is to multiply it. So our Lord found joy in communicating His risen life to others.

As He breathed upon the Apostles, giving them the new life, He did not part with it. By it He Himself dwelt in them.

2. This was no passing joy. It was a joy which would never cease. In bestowing the gift He rejoiced to contemplate all the results of His risen life in the extension of His kingdom to the end of time (*Isa.* liii. 10).

He rejoiced as He thought of each individual gathered into His Body and living with His life. He rejoiced in anticipation of welcoming soul after soul into His own joy : ' enter thou into the joy of thy Lord ' (*S. Matt.* xxv. 21).

He rejoiced as He thought of every grace that should be given to any member of His Body ; the grace of every conversion, of every sacrament, of every holy vocation.

He rejoiced to think how He would strengthen each one of His children to struggle with Satan, to bear the cross, to do His work in the world. We, with our individual difficulties and trials, were present to His consciousness, and He rejoiced in every victory His grace would enable us to win.

So think of His joy in breathing forth His risen life ; His joy to be the ' Father of the world to come ' (*Isa.* ix. 6,

Vulg.) ; His joy in gathering us to Himself as His children ; His joy in strengthening us in all our needs.

III. Our Joy in communicating this Life to others

1. As priests He calls us to partake of His joy in all our ministrations. We are to feel that we do indeed breathe forth the same breath of life which He communicates to us.

How great should be our joy in thus ministering to others ! Let us not be content with a ministry of mere earthly activity or of dead routine. We must live and act in the power of this new life ; must bear witness to it ; must manifest it to others, must show unto them ' that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us ' (1 *S. John* i. 2).

2. Are we living according to this law of supernatural life ? Are we conscious of bearing this life about within us ? If we do not experience it ourselves, how can we manifest it to others, or expect them to believe in it ?

The ministry we have received is not one of mere external authority, but of living power. The presence of Christ with us must make itself felt.

As we go about our parishes, is it felt that we come, as it were, from beyond the grave : that we have died unto the world, and are alive unto God ? Is it felt that, like the risen Lord, we are in the world, but not of it ?

Do we merely speak of a Saviour, or do we bring His presence near ? Think, when we go to visit the sick or the dying, what it would be if Jesus Himself were to appear. So should it be when we are there. Mere words of orthodoxy fall flat and dead upon the ears of the suffering, the sorrowful, or the sinful. It is only life that can quicken life. We are not really ministers of the Gospel, if we are not ministers of this risen life.

Thus let us think of our ministry as a ministry of resurrection life, and power, and joy.

3. But remember, it can only be this if, like our Lord, we bear upon ourselves the marks of the crucifixion. As

Christ stood in the midst of His disciples He bore in hands, and feet, and side, the marks of the Cross. We must not think it hard if the marks of suffering appear on us. We can only know ' the power of His resurrection ' by ' being made conformable to His death ' (*Phil.* iii. 10). The two things, the life and the death, go together. They are two sides of the same fact : we are baptized into His death, that we may live with His new life (*Rom.* vi. 3, 4).

Thus, then, meditate upon the Breath of the risen life ; its supernatural character ; our Lord's joy in imparting it to us ; our joy in ministering it to others. And in our prayer let us make acts of faith in its reality, and let us surrender ourselves to live more truly in its joy, and to act more simply and more consciously in its power.

Imitation of Christ, III. xxi, xxxiv.

OUR LORD'S ASCENSION

PREL. i. S. Luke xxiv. 50–53.

Prel. ii. Our Lord blessing His Apostles as He begins to ascend.

Prel. iii. Pray that in heart and mind you may ascend and dwell with Him.

I. THE ASCENSION

'He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.' So, as Bishop Westcott says, the Resurrection was finally shown in its permanence and in its glory. Our Lord did not merely vanish from their sight as He had done on former occasions. He withdrew in a peculiarly solemn way as though to suggest to them that this was His last appearance, and that He was now entering upon a new mode of connection with His Church. 'He lifted up His hands and blessed them,' then He began to ascend. Upward He went, while they watched Him till a cloud received Him and they saw Him no more. The physical elevation was a symbol, not the reality which it symbolized. The change which Christ revealed by the Ascension was not a change of place, but a change of state. He did not ascend as from place to place, but from glory to glory. During the forty days His sacred humanity had continued in one condition of nearness to our earthly mode of life; now we may think of Him passing onward through the successive ranks of angels, taking into Himself the glory which belongs to each, while at the same time He manifests Himself to them as their King. Onward He goes for ten days, till at last His Ascension is completed in the full glorification of His Body by the Spirit, and then the fiery tongues of Pentecost announced on earth what had taken place in heaven.

The Apostles had been united to our Lord by the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday, but that union was inoperative to quicken and sanctify them till the Spirit was poured out upon them (*S. John* vi. 63). Now, as Christ takes His place upon the heavenly throne, the Spirit who glorifies Him must

needs quicken and glorify those who were united to Him on earth. Of this divine action the Pentecostal fire was the outward sign and token. Henceforth the Church, as the Body of Christ, shares the glory in which He personally lives and acts on high.

II. The Blessing

'He lifted up His hands and blessed them.' This was His last act on earth. As it is said of the High Priest under the Law, that when he had finished his service, he 'lifted up his hands over the congregation of the children of Israel, to give the blessing of the Lord' (*Ecclus.* l. 20); so when Christ our Lord had finished His work on earth and was returning to His Father, He gave to His disciples His solemn blessing, and in this act of blessing He was parted from them and received up into heaven.

So let us think how, ever since that time, the Church has been under the benediction of those uplifted hands. He is in heaven, and we upon earth; yet His hands are stretched out over us, and the dew of His blessing is poured all around, like the cloud of glory in which the Israelites in the wilderness were bathed.

And as with the whole Church, so also with each individual Christian. One by one, as we are brought into Christ's fold, we come beneath the shadow of those sacred hands. One by one we live under their protection. One by one, at our ordination, we are called to work under their benediction.

And the blessing which He began to bestow upon earth, gained greater power as He ascended; for He ascended up on high on purpose to receive gifts for men (*Ps.* lxviii. 18; *Eph.* iv. 8), above all the gift of the Holy Ghost, whereby we are united with Him in the unity of a true divine life (*S. John* xvi. 7; *Acts* ii. 33).

So the Ascension brings to us the possibility of that which was denied to Mary Magdalene. 'Hold Me not,' our Lord had said to her, 'for I am not yet ascended' (*S. John* xx. 17). But now, in the power of the Spirit, we are to hold fast, and retain our hold on, Christ the Head. We are to hold Him by the grasp of a living faith, who holds us through sacramental union.

Think of this in relation to our Eucharists. By feeding upon Christ's Body and Blood we have our union with Him continually renewed, invigorated, confirmed. He dwells in us, and we in Him. But it is not so much that He comes down to us ; rather we are lifted up to Him. He does not come near to us by local transition, as if in one locality He would be nearer to us than in another ; but He comes near in the power of the Holy Ghost, and by the communication of His life-giving Body lifts us up that we may dwell with Him in the glory of His own divine life. *Sursum Corda.* That is our true attitude. We have in heart to follow our ascended Lord to the throne of glory, not seeking to bring Him down to the limitation of earthly conditions, but yielding ourselves up to Him that He may gather us into the energy of His own glorified life.

III. The Return of the Apostles

' They worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.'

Their Lord was gone, but they were full of joy. They knew now the truth of what He had said, that it was expedient for them that He should go away (*S. John* xvi. 7). He was gone from them in natural modes of presence, but He was really nearer to them than ever He had been before. By His presence within them they felt themselves to share the glory and the joy of His Ascension. He was parted from them in outward intercourse, but by His Spirit He held them to Himself in the unity of His own divine life.

So we may think of their great joy. And while we do so, let us remember that it is a joy which we ought to share. All that the Ascension was to them it is to us. We too are united to Christ in His glory, and partake of the Spirit proceeding from Him. By the power of the Holy Ghost the joy and the glory which He experiences are ever streaming forth upon us, ready to well up within our hearts, if we will surrender ourselves to Him. Oh, how we dishonour Him and grieve His loving heart when we choose to remain in our own self-centred gloom, instead of rising up into His joy which He calls us to share !

So as we come to the end of our retreat, and are about to return to our ordinary life and work, let us try to do so as sharing the joy and inspiration of the Apostles.

They, through all the varied manifestations of the risen Lord, came to grasp the truth of the Resurrection, and the heavenly character of the new life which it laid open to them. We, as we ponder the record, must find our own faith confirmed, and feel afresh the glow and power of that same heavenly life into the fellowship of which we have been taken. They received the assurance of His presence with them, and the promise of power from on high. We know that this assurance and the promise still hold good for us. They felt within themselves the unction of that Spirit of gladness which hereafter they were to minister to others. It is for us to feel the same. That joy is meant to be the strength of our life and work, as it was of theirs. 'The joy of the Lord is your strength' (*Neh.* viii. 10). In the power of this joy we have to go forth and bear witness to Christ. 'Ye shall be My witnesses' (*Acts* i. 8). And in the power of this joy we are to do the work which Christ gives us to do. Only while we are living in its power can we help others to desire it and to share it. It is useless to tell of a distant heaven, we must bring heaven along with us. We must make men feel that we have a life and a joy which the world can neither give nor take away. It was this which converted the world of old; it is this which must be the means of its conversion still. If men see that our religion is worth having they will want to know about it and to share it.

Let this, then, be the fruit of our retreat, that we go back to our work resolving, hoping, endeavouring, to live more consciously in the joyous fellowship of our Lord's ascended life, to experience more truly 'the powers of the world to come' into which we have been taken, to speak and to act more habitually under the control of the Spirit whom we have received.

Imitation of Christ, III. xlviii, xlix.

RETREAT III

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THE PRIEST'S VOCATION

PREL. i. Think of the day when you knelt before the bishop and were ordained to the priesthood. Try to recall what were your thoughts and feelings then,—the sense certainly of unfitness and unworthiness, of the greatness and the responsibility of the office you were receiving, and yet the happiness, the hope, and the prayer that you might be a good priest and bring forth much fruit to the glory of God.

Think of the love with which our Lord looked upon you as He accepted your offering of yourself; and think, too, how it was all not of yourself, but the outcome of His gracious choice and call. 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you' (*S. John* xv. 16).

Prel. ii. Pray God to renew and deepen in you the true spirit of your vocation.

I. THE FACT AND TRUTH OF YOUR VOCATION

You are a priest because of God's call. It was God's choice of you, God's choice for you. 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.' Does it ever seem to you as if that were not quite true in your case? Does it sometimes seem to you that after all the choice was *yours*, that it was you who chose to be ordained, and therefore that your vocation rests upon the insecure basis of something in yourself?

In one sense this may be true. There may have been much that seemed like human motives, or the mere force of circumstances, that determined your choice. But in another and deeper sense it was all God's doing. Whence came those thoughts, those desires, which first drew you to the priesthood? They came from God. His choice reaches back into eternity, and embraces the whole mystery of the life and circumstances of each one of us. We obeyed His call and persevered in following, because the dispositions, the desires, the secret sympathies within us, had been implanted by Himself. His choice was beforehand with us; His love has been deeper than, and prior to, ours. He

chose us, and then gave us the capacity and the will to choose Him. Looking only at the outward history of our life, and the final act of obedience by which we accepted His call and followed, it might seem that we had chosen Him. Looking to the whole inner moral history of which that act was the outcome and expression—a history penetrated from first to last by the working of His providence and His grace—the words express a literal truth, 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.'[1]

II. The Dawn and Development of your Vocation

Think how the wish to be a priest came to you, perhaps at school, or even as far back as you can remember anything; or was it later, at the University? And then think of the year or more you spent at some Theological College—Cuddesdon, Ely, or elsewhere—where you began to learn something of the order and discipline of the priestly life. Recall those happy days, the high hopes and generous impulses you then had, and see how God led you on from grace to grace, till the day of your ordination first as deacon and then as priest.

It is good for us to revisit in spirit those times and places in our life where God has greatly blessed us. And if, as we look back over the way God led us up to our ordination, there comes some feeling of sadness as we think how, in the years that followed, we have not come up to the ideal which we had then; and now perhaps the ideal itself has become blurred and faded, and we are conscious that we have lost something of our first love—well, in this very sadness there is the spring and hope of recovery. God has not changed, and His purpose for us has not changed, and the ideal which He showed us in those happy days has not changed. It is still held out to us. It may still be ours. The sadness, the regret, the wish that we could be what we once hoped to be, are God's call still sounding within us, God's grace still urging us and drawing us onwards.

So, in your meditation, stop and think of this. Go over the sweet memories of those early days. Recall the penitence, the love, the joy, the courage, the hope, you then

[1] See H. P. Liddon, *Clerical Life and Work*, Serm. vii.

had ; and if you feel the contrast with the present, let it lead you to make acts of contrition for all unfaithfulness and sins. Cry out for pardon, cleansing, renewal. Pray that God would revive His work in you. Stir up the gift of God that is in you, for surely it is there. Give yourself anew to God, in this retreat. Say to Him, ' O my God, out of the depth of my nothingness, my wretchedness, my defilements, I look up to Thee. Thou art still my hope and all my good. Restore to me the joy of Thy countenance. O make me once more Thy friend. Make me all that Thou wouldest have me to be ; a priest after Thine own heart.'

So think of your vocation ; the choice of God laid on you from early years ; the steps by which He led you on to the happiness of those days when you first realized what God was calling you to, and you gave yourself to Him with a generous response.

III. Failure and Disappointment

Think what your life has been since ordination. Ask for courage to face the truth about it, the fading of ideals, the loss of first love, the relapse, it may be, into old sins which you thought you had conquered and put away for ever.

Why has this been ? Is it because you have not listened to the voice of God ? Is it that you have listened to other voices to which you ought at once to have closed your ears—to the voice of the tempter, to the voices of the world or of the flesh ?

It is not surprising that we should be tempted. We have to reckon with the envy of the devil, and his desire to spoil God's work. From the beginning he has sought to do this, tempting our first parents in the paradise where God had placed them.

Yes, we cannot expect to be without temptation. The priest especially must expect to be tempted. The higher our vocation, the more surely will Satan try to mar it, to hinder, and, if he can, to overthrow God's purpose. He will try to steal away our hearts through some deceit or wile, through the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life. And then, if we listen to him, and yield, and consent, what is the result ? The loss of joy in communion

with God, the fading of our ideals, the corruption of sin, the sinking down into a life of dead routine.

But God comes to us in our retreat, as He came to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, to seek us out, to call us back to Himself. 'Where art thou?' He calls us out of our hiding places to face the truth about ourselves; to acknowledge before Him all our failure and our sin; to recall in our penitence the old ideals, and the happiness we once enjoyed in our vocation, and to pray that we may begin again to stir up the gift that is in us.

So as we go over in our minds the sad remembrance of our sins and failures, let it not weigh us down in hopelessness or despair. Let it rather bring us back to God in penitence and humility, as we begin our retreat. And out of that penitence will spring up again the old hope, the old ideal, the remembrance of the old happiness; and we shall know that it is still a possibility for us, that God is calling us still with the old changeless call of His eternal love and purpose. And if we come to Him now, feeling our poverty, and helplessness, and shame; yet desiring to be pardoned, set free, and renewed in spirit, He will bring good out of all our evil, and on the foundation of a deeper penitence and humility, He will build up, out of our ruin, the beauty and the sanctity of the true priestly character.

Yes, let me be sure of it, our Lord made no mistake when He chose me to be His priest. He knew what I was and He knew what, by His grace, I could become. My unworthiness, my natural incapacity, even my sins, when I am penitent, are no bar to the realization of His purpose for me. Whatever has been the failure of the past, however feebly I have responded to the call, yet, thank God, I may still be what He meant me to be, and still means me to be, a true priest, a holy priest, one who, through His grace, shall go from strength to strength, and bring forth fruit that shall abide.

O my God, accept my penitence. Renew in me the spirit of my vocation. Make me all that Thou wouldest have me to be. Grant that I may yet love Thee with all the love I might have had, if I had not so sinned against Thee.

Imitation of Christ, III. x, xxii.

THE PRIEST'S EXAMPLE

PREL. i. Think of some holy priest you have known or read of. What was the secret of his influence and power with souls? Was it not the holiness of his life?

Prel. ii. Pray that God would give you the desire and the grace to be above all else a holy priest.

I. THE EXAMPLE OF A HOLY LIFE IS THE BEST OF SERMONS

Much is said in these days of the importance of preaching. It is true. Preaching is a very important part of our work. It requires all the study and preparation we can give to it. Let us take care that we are not slothful here, 'doing the work of the Lord negligently' (*Jer.* xlviii. 10, marg.), or 'adulterating (καπηλεύοντες, 2 *Cor.* ii. 17) the word of God,' i.e. preaching for our own glory or gain.

Preaching is important, and may be a great power for good, if we preach sincerely, with trust in our divine mission, and having no personal aim to serve; but more important and a greater power is the priest's example. Most people are more influenced by what they see than by what they merely hear, and a consistent holy life is a visible fact. The sight of the Curé d'Ars as he went about his parish, or ministered and prayed in his church, was a greater power than all the preaching of far more learned and eloquent but less holy priests. To see him kneeling in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament was worth more than a whole course of sermons on the Real Presence.

Example preaches without ceasing. *Vita clericorum est liber laicorum, et continuum velut praedicandi genus.* It is more than the word spoken from the pulpit, however frequent that may be. The consistent life of a holy priest preaches without intermission. He preaches as he goes about his parish. Everything about him speaks of God, his dress, his recollected and modest behaviour, his gentle-

ness and charity, his house, his simple way of living, his detachment from earthly things.

He preaches by the reverence of all his ministrations, especially at the altar. He preaches also as he prays or makes his meditation in the church. It is this which will best draw his people to use the church for their own prayers, and will give it that atmosphere of devotion which is so valuable an aid to our work. It is of little use to keep a church open, if the parish priest is seldom or never seen there at his prayers. All this silent language of example not only strikes people's minds, but touches their hearts, and this, we know, is the real triumph of preaching.

It is the testimony of all experience. Ask the old people of any parish the name of the priest who has made the deepest impression there, and you will always find it is the name of one who has been remarkable for holiness.

II. The Example of a Holy Life is a Necessary Condition of Real Success in Parish Work

If the priest is to succeed he must be respected, and indeed venerated ; and it is the witness of a consistent holy life which alone will win this respect. The least suspicion that he does not practise what he preaches will paralyse all his efforts.

There are two ways especially in which the priest must bear this witness.

1. *Openly, courageously, without fear of man.* How often we are tempted to compromise with the world, to take on something of the world's habits and ways of speech, to lower our tone to that of the society in which we mix ! With a false prudence, or a false humility, we are afraid to let it be seen that we are what we know a priest ought to be. Perhaps we make the excuse to ourselves that we are following S. Paul's example, who said of himself, ' I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some ' (1 *Cor.* ix. 22). But we pervert his meaning. He did not mean that in making concessions to the weakness of others we should compromise divine truth, or fail in our duty to God.

Our Lord has warned us against any such mistaken

notions when He said to His disciples, ' Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven ' (*S. Matt.* v. 14–16). We must not shrink from letting it be seen by our dress, our words, our behaviour, that we are Christ's servants and wear His livery.

2. *Without intermission*, at all times and in all places. The priest is never ' off duty,' as the soldier sometimes is. At any time he may be called upon for some exercise of his ministry, or to speak in the name of religion. A secular manner of dress and behaviour would be plainly out of harmony with the discharge of such clerical duties, and would be felt as such by the laity. Even the people of the world, who care little for religion, are keenly alive to any lapse from the outward standard to which they still expect a priest to conform.

This should suggest serious reflections. Does my conduct give scandal in any respects to the faithful, or to the world? Let me examine myself as to sloth and neglect of duties, worldliness, luxury, avarice, anger, backbiting, idle gossip, secularity of conversation and conduct, equivocal relations with others. The priest must be an example to all ' in word, in manner of life, in faith, in purity ' (1 *Tim.* iv. 12). He must ' abstain from all appearance of evil ' (1 *Thess.*v. 22). That must be our rule. But we must go deeper.

III. The Outward Example must be the Fruit of Inward Character

Spirituality, the inward life, this is the essential thing in the priestly character. It is not so much what we say, or even what we do, but what we are, that tells.

Some years ago a bishop told his ordination candidates of a young priest who had been appointed to a country parish. He was not long there, for he was scarcely more than thirty when he died. But a few years after his death, a friend visiting the place asked a labourer whether he thought that Mr. —— had done any good. The answer came at once, ' I never saw that man cross the common yonder, Sir, without being the better for it.' [1]

[1] *The Personal Life of the Clergy*, by A. W. Robinson, pp. 11, 12.

Does it seem too high an aim for us, that our people should be the better for the simple fact of our living among them? Yet can we really be satisfied with any aim short of this? Are we not sure that holiness is indispensable for the priest who would fulfil his mission?

Think of our Lord's words, 'For their sakes I sanctify, I consecrate, Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth'—not merely in name, but in reality (*S. John* xvii. 19). The words disclose a principle which applies especially to us of the clergy, who are called to carry on our Lord's work. For the sake of our people, of all to whom we have to minister and amongst whom we live, we must consecrate ourselves.

We cannot indeed analyse the power of a consecrated life; it is too subtle and far-reaching for us to follow it out. But there can be no doubt of its reality. Experience proves it again and again.

And it is a truth which, if we make it familiar, 'may help us in regard to our temptations, even the most hidden and solitary. It may help us to do battle with our despondency and sadness, with our restlessness and resentment, with the perverting and corrupting misery of ambition. But we must be uncompromising if the self-consecration is to do its work. One sin indulged, condoned, domesticated, may spoil all; may cripple all our hope of usefulness, may baffle the willingness of God to use us in His work for others.'[1]

'For their sakes I consecrate Myself.' Let this, then, be our constant hope and prayer, that God will enable us so to consecrate ourselves with thoroughness to Him, that we may be really holy priests, and may by our example help, and not hinder, the work to which as priests we are called.

[1] See Bp. F. Paget, *The Hallowing of Work*, pp. 16, 19.

Imitation of Christ, I. xviii; III. xlvii; IV. v.

THE PRIEST'S JUDGEMENT

PREL. i. 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgement' (*Heb.* ix. 27).

Prel. ii. Pray that you may so judge yourself now that you may not be condemned in that day (1 *Cor.* xi. 31).

In the day of judgement you will see what your life has really been. Try to think of it now, taking account of it under the three following heads: your mortal sins, your venial sins, your fancied merits. With regard to each of these you may be fatally deceiving yourself.

I. YOUR MORTAL SINS

1. A priest may flatter himself that he has no mortal sin upon his conscience, and in this deceive himself. For example, some count only sins against purity as mortal. They think they are not gravely culpable in this matter, and therefore have little or nothing to fear. But there are many other sins which are weighty matters in a priest: serious neglect of ministerial duties, preaching, visiting, hearing confessions, instruction of children and ignorant persons, preparation of the sick and dying for the last sacraments; or again, evil-speaking, slander, malice, spite, bad example. Are you certain that you have nothing grave to accuse yourself of in such matters as these?

2. Again, priests are apt to persuade themselves that the sins which they commit are not worse than the same sins in lay people; that their priesthood adds no special aggravation of guilt. But this is very far from the truth. S. Alphonsus says, 'The sin of a priest is always a very serious matter, because a priest sins against so much light and grace. Every sin of a priest is like the sin of the angels, who sinned in heaven, in the very presence and face of God.' And the Fathers over and over again speak to the same effect.

They point out also the great ingratitude of the priest who sins, applying to him the words of the Psalmist, 'It is not an open enemy that hath done me this dishonour. . . .

But it was even thou mine own familiar friend, whom I trusted, who did also eat of my bread ' (*Ps.* lv. 12 ; xli. 9).

3. From this follows another illusion. One of the principal penalties of a priest's sin, is a progressive spiritual blindness and hardening of heart, so that he becomes insensible to the consequences of sin both here and hereafter. His conscience is deadened and his will weakened. Thus one sin leads on to another, and from being in the light he passes into darkness. So, in mysterious words, S. John speaks of Judas as he left the supper room : ' Having received the cup he went immediately out, and it was night ' (xiii. 30). The darkness of the night outside was typical of the darkness of his soul within. How seldom do you think seriously of these present consequences of your sins !

Still less do you like to think of their consequences in another world—the consequences of grave sins, confessed it may be, but not expiated by real penance. You have received absolution and performed some slight penance enjoined by your confessor, and so you think no more about the matter. But what about your contrition and purpose of amendment ? What about taking vengeance upon yourself by voluntary acts of penance and a disciplined life ? How many confessions and absolutions are fruitless, if not sacrilegious, for want of real contrition and satisfaction ! What will you think of all this on your deathbed ? What, when you see it in the light of the judgement of God ?

II. Your Venial Sins

1. Here again you may easily be deceived, persuading yourself that though your venial sins may be many in number they are mostly not deliberate, and so need not greatly trouble you. Yet many of them are much more deliberate than you like to think. They are committed against the warnings of conscience. Therefore they are not free from guilt, and may have serious consequences both here and hereafter. They wound the heart of Jesus, and oblige Him to withdraw Himself from you. Often, through frequent repetition, they have issued in evil habits which hinder

your prayers and your work, and have perhaps brought you into that state of lukewarmness which our Lord so especially hates. 'I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth' (*Rev.* iii. 15, 16).

This is a serious thought for priests. You will do well to meditate upon it deeply.

2. In another world too these venial sins will bear their consequences. While the priest is living a lukewarm, careless life, it is difficult for him to have contrition for his venial sins, or even the attrition necessary to receive absolution aright. What, then, ought you to think of your many confessions of venial sins, often so perfunctory? Is there no fear lest, for want of proper dispositions, your absolutions are useless or invalid?

3. Or do you intend to live a stricter, more fervent life by and by—not just yet, but five or ten years hence, or in old age when you think you will have more leisure? How do you know that you will live to old age, nay that you will have another year? And in any case does not all experience teach us that things which we are constantly putting off most often never get done at all? Old habits of procrastination and sloth become harder to break the longer they are allowed to continue. You know it. You preach the dismal truth to others. Preach it now to yourself.

III. Your Fancied Merits

Here again there may be self-deception. There will be degrees of reward in heaven depending upon the use made of grace and opportunities here. Everything done for love of God and in the power of grace will have its reward in some increase of glory in heaven, because each will have enlarged the soul's capacity to receive. On the other hand, all that is done from selfish or worldly motives, every indulgence of the lower nature at the expense of the higher, will entail the forfeiture of some degree of glory that might have been attained.

Think, then, of the losses even of those who are saved: the loss of reward for so many of their works because there

was not the right motive in them. They were dead works. They were not done for love of God and in the power of grace; but in pride, or selfishness, or self-will, or the desire for human praise, or in mere heartless routine.

The Apostle speaks of a fire of judgement which shall try every man's work. 'If any man's work abide,' through that fire, 'he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire' (1 *Cor.* iii. 14, 15)—saved as a man who escapes through the flames of his burning house, with loss of all his goods.

A life-long labour perished! It is piteous when we hear of it even in this life. But what is that compared with the loss which is eternal—the loss of all, or of so much, of a life's work, because it was not done for God nor in the power of grace, and therefore cannot abide the fire of His judgement?

And worse still, the loss of so much capacity for the love of God, who has said, 'I am thy exceeding great Reward' (*Gen.* xv. 1). What would not the soul give, if it could win back any of that capacity of loving God, which it has forfeited! But it cannot be. It is only in this life that we can lay up treasure in heaven. We are to be rewarded for the 'deeds done in the body' (2 *Cor.* v. 10). The good deeds might have been done and were not, or fell manifoldly short of what by God's grace they might have been, and the loss is irreparable.

From this loss and suffering there is no escape except by casting off now our sin and sloth, exchanging the dead routine of an unspiritual, worldly life for one of burning love and zeal, pressing on 'toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus' (*Phil.* iii. 14).

Imitation of Christ, III. iv, viii, lii.

THE PRIEST'S CONDEMNATION

PREL. i. Our Lord's sentence upon the unfaithful priest: 'Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (*S. Matt.* xxv. 30).

Prel. ii. Ask for 'an interior sense of the pain which the lost suffer, in order that if through your faults[1] you should forget the love of the eternal Lord, at least the fear of punishment may help you not to sin' (*S. Ignatius*).

It is from the lips of our loving Saviour that we learn most about hell. In love He tells us the truth in order that, taking it to heart, we may be kept from sin and its awful consequences. Consider then:

I. THE HORROR OF A PRIEST'S DAMNATION

As the righteous will be rewarded according to their merits, so sinners will be punished according to their guilt; and that guilt will be in proportion to the light and grace against which they have sinned.

Priests, speaking generally, are among the most privileged of Christians. They have received more abundant light and grace than others. Their punishment, therefore, will be the more terrible, if they sin and die in their sin.

Moreover, priests, for the very reason that they have received greater light and grace than others, will have a more lively sense of the pains of hell, especially the pain of loss, which S. Chrysostom says is the greatest of the pains of hell: the loss of God, of Jesus Christ, of Blessed Mary, of the holy angels and the saints.

The priest in hell will see so clearly the infinite Good which he has lost by his own fault, and will feel an eternal, fruitless remorse.

He will see that he might, like many of his brother priests, so easily have been saved.

[1] 'Faults,' i.e. lesser sins, which, if condoned and allowed, chill and diminish our love of God, and so pave the way for a fall into mortal sin.

He will envy the many lay people, who, though they had fewer graces and privileges than himself, are in heaven; and still more the many priests, some of them among his friends and colleagues, who have turned, it may be, their fewer gifts and talents to good account, and won the crown of glory.

While he rebels against his sentence he will be forced to confess that it is just, that it is the inevitable result of his evil life, and he will curse himself and his lot for ever. Of the lost priest especially our Lord's words will be fulfilled, 'Their worm dieth not,' the gnawing worm of remorse, rage, and impotent revolt (*S. Mark* ix. 44). Good were it for such a man if he had never been born (*S. Mark* xiv. 21).

No words about hell can be more terrible than those of our Lord, 'Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity' (*S. Matt.* vii. 23).

To the pain of loss will be added the pain of sense, 'the fire that never shall be quenched' (*S. Mark* ix. 43). What is meant by this 'fire' we cannot tell. Our Lord may be speaking the language of parable or imagery, as indeed all human language about the unseen world must be imagery. But this does not mitigate its terror. A fearful picture has a fearful meaning: a terrible parable implies a terrible reality.

II. The Possibility of my own Damnation

The history of Judas ought to suggest serious reflections to every priest.

Outwardly Judas seemed as the other Apostles. He kept up appearances almost to the end. At the Last Supper none suspected him. Even when our Lord said to him, 'What thou doest, do quickly,' and Judas went out from the room, none suspected him (*S. John* xiii. 27, 30).

But inwardly his life was rotten. He cherished a secret sin, and would not part with it in spite of the many warnings given by our Lord.

1. *Consider the progress of his sin.*

(1) He lost faith in our Lord. He would not accept His mysterious words about the Blessed Sacrament. He did not indeed as yet desert Him. He still followed, but he had

lost the inspiration of his supernatural call. Jesus was no longer to him the One who had 'the words of eternal life' (*S. John* vi. 68).

(2) With loss of faith came loss of love, and a worldly spirit. He began to look at things in what, no doubt, he thought a practical, business-like way. Worldly ambition and covetousness ate out his spiritual life.

(3) He became a thief (*S. John* xii. 6). Perhaps his excuse was that he had debts to pay, or a wife and children to support. Things came to a head at Bethany. He wanted money. 'Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?' It was a false excuse, hiding his avarice under a plea of charity to the poor.

(4) Then, partly perhaps in resentment, and partly because our Lord spoke of His approaching death and held out no hope to earthly ambition, Judas went and made his bargain with the priests.

(5) After that came the Last Supper; the hypocritical question, along with the others, 'Master, is it I?'; then the final warning, 'Thou hast said' (*S. Matt.* xxvi. 25), and, perhaps, his sacrilegious communion.

2. *Consider some points in which we may be not unlike Judas*:

(1) He had a true vocation; so, we trust, have we.

(2) He obeyed the call of Jesus, and followed Him almost to the end. But worldly ambition sapped his faith, and then his love. He followed with a divided heart. Is this in any way a picture of myself?

(3) He began with little sins which led to greater ones, at last to the final sin of betrayal. He did not know how hard his heart was becoming.

It is a warning to every priest. Have I no cause to fear? My temptation may not be that of Judas, but there are other sins which may equally dull the conscience and harden the heart, pride, for instance, or lust, or sloth.

III. The Fear of Hell a Salutary Fear

Many a priest may owe his salvation to the meditation on hell made in some retreat. The fear of hell awakened him when living in sin, or held him back from sinning in some time of strong temptation. Our Lord appealed to this motive of fear when He said to His Apostles, 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell' (*S. Matt.* x. 28).

But it must be the right kind of fear. Obviously it cannot be a servile fear. Our Lord could never have told His Apostles to fear God in that way. It must be a fear which is consistent with hope, and with the love of God. The priest in a very special way is the friend of our Lord (*S. John* xv. 15). He ought, then, to be full of confidence and love. He must give no place to those painful terrors which paralyse and depress the soul, engendering scruples and despair. His fear of hell must be because he desires to love God and fears to lose Him.

At the same time it must be practical and efficacious. Fear is useless if it does not lead us to solid resolutions to avoid not only mortal sin but all occasions of it, all that puts us in danger of it. Here we must be inflexible *tutiorists*, always taking the safer course. We must never forget S. Bernard's maxim, *Nunquam datur satis magna securitas, ubi periclitatur aeternitas*: one can never be too careful when eternity is at stake. That is the line we ought to take with our penitents. We shall be safe only if we take it with ourselves.

But let me not be content merely to keep from mortal sin. Rather let me pray for such burning love of God that I may never again commit even a deliberate venial sin; but by watchfulness, self-discipline, and prayer may become a really holy priest, well-pleasing in all things to God and to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxiv.

THE FORBEARANCE AND MERCY OF GOD

PREL. i. Think of the holiness, majesty, and power of God, and of His hatred of sin. And then think of the wonder of His patience and forbearance with us : ' long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance ' (2 *S. Pet.* iii. 9).

Prel. ii. Thank God for His forbearance and long-suffering towards you, and pray that you may never abuse it.

I. GOD'S PATIENCE AND FORBEARANCE

1. This is something that only I myself can measure. None but myself knows what my inward history has been—the graces heaped upon me, and yet my many sins ; the oft-repeated forgiveness, and yet my frequent relapses and fresh rebellions ; the sweet caresses of God's love, and yet my coldness in His service. And still He bears with me, and has not allowed the unfruitful tree to be cut down.

2. Or think again : I am still here on earth, still in the Church, still with the means of grace and the hope of heaven ; while many, perhaps less guilty than myself, are already in hell. Still God gives me life, touches my heart and conscience with good inspirations, gives me the opportunity of this retreat.

3. What is the reason of all this ? It is because God sees me not merely as I am, but as I am capable of becoming. Deep down in me, perhaps almost hidden from myself, He sees the Christ-life implanted in me at Baptism ; and though so neglected, so marred by my manifold sins, still capable of growth and development according to His predestined purpose for me.

II. GOD'S SEEKING LOVE

The first movement comes from God, from the changeless love of the Father's heart. ' God so loved the world, that

He gave His only-begotten Son ' (*S. John* iii. 16). ' Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins ' (1 *S. John* iv. 10). ' God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ' (*Rom.* v. 8).

Behold this love manifested in Christ, in the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, ' The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost ' (*S. Luke* xix. 10).

Think of Him as the Good Shepherd seeking the one lost sheep ' until He find it ' (*S. Luke* xv. 4), and that lost sheep thyself. We never stray from Jesus in the rough ways of sin but He knows it, and His heart is touched with compassion for our misery and danger. He does not delay a moment to seek us. The remorse we feel, the longing that we had not sinned, the desire to repent and confess, is His voice, calling us back to Himself.

' He goeth after it.' Think what that going meant to Him. His coming down from heaven to take our nature, all the toils and sorrows of His earthly life, His passion and His death upon the Cross.

' Until He find it.' Never giving up the search, never shrinking from the suffering, loving us ' to the end.'

And still the Sacred Heart has the same love for each soul that has strayed and is lost. Still for each He would, if it were needed, come down again to earth and be crucified afresh.

Think of Him seeking sinners one by one : the woman of Samaria, Matthew the Publican, Zacchaeus, Peter after his denial. Think how He has sought thee in so many ways known only to thyself—strong drawings of His grace ; gleams of happiness in His love, more satisfying than all the happiness of earth ; sweetness He has sometimes given thee in prayer, and in Communion, and then again hiding Himself that thou mightest seek Him the more. Or on the other hand, stinging thy conscience, goading thee with fears, making thee feel the misery and restlessness of a heart that is not at rest in Him.

Think how He is seeking thee now in this retreat. If thou art a wanderer in sin, seeking to bring thee back in penitence ; or if that stage is past, seeking to draw thee

nearer to Himself in some closer embrace of love, some more intimate fellowship of life.

So meditate upon the seeking love of God, and then—

III. His Welcome of the Penitent

The first two parables of S. Luke xv set forth the seeking love of God ; the third, that of the prodigal son, describes the rise and growth, in response to that love, of penitence in the heart of man. God's seeking love is set forth first, because He must first seek us before we can begin to seek Him.

We need not think now of the whole parable, but only of the latter part of it, God's welcome of the penitent.

While still a great way off his father sees him, runs to meet him, falls on his neck and kisses him. The prodigal makes his confession with his head resting on his father's heart. ' Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' He was going to add, ' make me as one of thy hired servants ' ; but his father does not wait for that. At once he bids the servants bring forth the ' best robe,' and put it upon him, and a ' ring on his hand,' and ' shoes on his feet,' and ' bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found.'

So think how God will welcome your penitence, how He will restore to you lost treasures, the best or first robe (*στολὴν τὴν πρώτην*), the white robe of baptismal grace, lost by sin, restored by absolution ; the ring, the sign of union with Christ as His bride ; the shoes, the symbol of alacrity in the service of God, ' I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou hast set my heart at liberty ' (*Ps.* cxix. 32) ; and the feast, the Blessed Sacrament ; and the companionship of all in the Father's house, no longer a stranger and an outcast, but a ' fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God ' (*Eph.* ii. 19).

And then the joy : ' Let us eat and be merry.' Or as it is in the two other parables : ' Rejoice with Me ; for I have found My sheep, My coin, which was lost.' So think what your penitence is to God, His joy in it. And the joy of

saints and angels, the joy in heaven over each returning penitent (*S. Luke* xv. 7, 10).

And the penitent's own joy : think also of that. A good confession brings great joy. Think of the joy of your first confession and absolution. There is often a renewal of this joy after a good confession in retreat. Cardinal Manning notes in his journal, March 28, 1852, during a retreat made at Rome : ' Monday night, after general confession I could hardly sleep for joy. I had the feeling I remember in 1832–33 down to the summer of that year. My past then seemed to be pardoned—twenty-three years blotted out, and I had a sort of lightness of heart and simple trust in the love of God. Heaven seemed blessed and near, and Holy Scripture heaven upon earth. Then came years of a loaded conscience, and doubt, and strife. . . . And now, once more, twenty years again, I am blotted out, and heaven and God's Word come back in sweetness, " Behold, I make all things new." '[1]

Thus think of the forbearance and tender mercy of God. Thank Him for it. Thank Him that you are not now in hell as you have deserved to be. Thank Him that He still gives you time and grace to repent and amend.

Thank Him too for His seeking love ; that He has sought you all your life, and is seeking you still.

And pray for grace to make a really contrite confession ; and that if it be His will, He will give you great joy in absolution, and an earnest longing to give yourself wholly to His service for the future.

[1] *Life*, vol. ii, p. 13.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxi ; III. viii, xxx.

THE WORKS OF CHRIST

PREL. i. Our Lord going through Galilee and Judaea, preaching to the people, and doing mighty works, and then after laborious days often spending the night in prayer. Think of His zeal for His Father's glory and for the souls of men.

Prel. ii. Pray our Lord to kindle in your heart the fire of His own love and zeal.

Of so vast a subject as our Lord's ministerial life we can only single out one or two leading features for our meditation now.

I. OUR LORD'S RULING MOTIVE

It was the glory of the Father and the accomplishment of His will. 'I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me' (*S. John* v. 30; vi. 38); 'I receive not honour from men' (ibid. v. 41); 'He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him' (ibid. vii. 18); 'I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do' (ibid. xvii. 4). This motive governed all our Lord's life. He never sought His own will or His own glory.

Let us ask ourselves what is the ruling motive of our life and work. We may be very active, full of plans and energy; but in retreat we need to examine ourselves as to the motive which underlies it all. Is it the true motive? Or have we let self slip in little by little? There is always this danger, the greater because so stealthy, so subtle and hard to detect. The love of prominence, influence, popularity, the praise of men—these are our dangers. And often it is so difficult to say where the true motive shades off into the wrong one; and the real state of the case is hidden from us till some failure in our work, some disappointment, some breakdown of health which forces us to give it up, reveals to us how

much self had appropriated of that which all along we thought we were doing for God.

So in retreat it is good to bring our life and work to the touchstone of the pure motive which ruled the life of our Lord, and to pray that God would show us if we are in any way losing this, which should be the inspiration of our own life and work.

II. His Unremitting Toil

Think of the multiplicity and variety of the works of Christ during the years of His public ministry, the constant teaching and preaching, the works of mercy and healing, the 'many coming and going,' so that at times there was 'no leisure so much as to eat' (*S. Mark* vi. 31). Journeying through the villages and towns of Galilee, thronged by crowds, weary in body and mind, yet feeling the urgency of the work and the shortness of the time. 'I must work the works of Him that sent Me: the night cometh when no man can work' (*S. John* ix. 4).

Think of the strain and cost of such a life. Our Lord felt weariness and exhaustion as we do. His divine nature did not exempt His human nature from any suffering we have to bear. Think of Him sitting 'wearied' by the well of Sychar (*S. John* iv. 6); or, after long hours of preaching, sleeping so soundly in the boat that even the violent storm did not wake Him (*S. Mark* iv. 38); or again, seeking some brief intervals of rest, alone or with His disciples, apart from the ceaseless pressure of the crowd (*S. Mark* vi. 31, 46).

Think of the constant demands upon His sympathy. 'Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses' (*S. Matt.* viii. 17). How? Surely by the depth and keenness of His sympathy. 'In all their affliction He was afflicted' (*Isa.* lxiii. 9).

Think of the sympathy you yourself have felt with the suffering and misery of so many around, or of the sorrow when souls for whom you care have fallen away into indifference or sin. That may help you to realize what the work of His ministry cost our Lord. The constant sight of so much misery, the fruit, as He knew it to be, of man's sin, pressed upon Him as a heavy burden. The daily inter-

course with the rude and unmannerly, the dull, the indifferent, the unbelieving, the ungrateful; the pain of hatred and rejection—think of the strain and exhaustion, the cost and suffering, of all this to the sacred humanity of our Lord. He did not pass through it in some triumphant power of divine energy which could feel no suffering nor weariness, but which would have made the experience of His human life unreal. No ; He felt it all, the weariness, the strain, the physical and mental cost of His ministry, as we too must often feel it in our ministry. So by personal experience He knows what are the trials of His priests, who still carry on His work in the world, often under difficult and trying conditions.

Will not this help us, as we bring our burdens and sorrows to Him, to know that He understands and bears them along with us ?

III. The Underlying Mystery

But while we think of this life of strain, let us remember also the mystery that underlay it, the mystery of our Lord's union with the Father. In all these works He was never separated from the Father. The works never absorbed Him so as to dull for one moment His consciousness of union with the Father. He never poured out Himself in them as a stream that is poured out and lost in the desert sand. Too often we work for others and lose ourselves while we do it, because we lose our hold on God. Not so our Lord. He took others into His sympathy, and lifted them up with Himself to the Father. ' Behold, I and the children which the Lord hath given Me ' (*Isa.* viii. 18). ' Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me ; and they have kept Thy word. . . . While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy Name, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition ' (*S. John* xvii. 6, 12).

The mystery of this interior life comes forth in all the work of His ministry among men, in the sympathy, the insight, the tact, the wisdom, with which He worked ; in all His gracious acts as He went about doing good, healing the sick, converting sinners, seeking to draw all to God.

And so with every saintly person we have known, and

whose influence we have felt. We remember that it was not always any special force of his words or gifts of intellect that drew us to God, and seemed to bring God near to us; but something in the man that we understood better than his words, and felt just as much at times when he was silent. It was the man's entire life with God. This kindled a light which could not be hid, this awakened, convinced, inflamed us. It was this life lived day by day with God, this life that never flagged and dropped to lower levels, this perseverance in spiritual vigour carried into all the details of life, that made us aware of God. As we watched, we said that these were not the works of nature. They were the works of Christ. They came out of a heart united to Christ, a heart that had died to self and to the world, and was alive in Christ. The works of Christ were always manifesting themselves in these saintly lives. There was no loss of spiritual energy as the bodily frame and mental faculties began to fail. The outward weakness only made the inward life more plainly manifest.

Meditate thus upon the supernatural virtue of the works of Christ and of His saints.

And then think how many of our works are dead and unfruitful, because they do not spring out of an interior union with Christ, but are done out of mere necessity or habit, perhaps out of pride and self-will.

So in your prayer seek to enter into this mystery of the ministry of Christ, and to know the emptiness of all that is done apart from Him. 'Apart from Me, ye can do nothing' (*S. John* xv. 5). Cherish the spirit of interior prayer and union with Christ, which alone can make your life and work to be fruitful for eternity.

Imitation of Christ, I. xv; III. xxxiii.

THE END AND AIM OF OUR MINISTRY

PREL. i. S. Paul writing to the Colossians : ' Christ in you, the hope of glory : whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom ; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus ' (i. 27, 28).

Prel. ii. Pray for a like gift of wisdom and zeal in your ministry.

I. THE AIM OF OUR MINISTRY

' To present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.' That was S. Paul's aim and hope. He longed and laboured to bring every one, of whatever station and occupation in life, to perfection. Not of course to absolute perfection. That is to be found only in Christ Himself. Each of us can partake of Christ's absolute perfection only in the measure of the grace given to him. Nor does perfection take the same form in all. As no two souls are created precisely alike, and as God calls us to different kinds of training and discipline, so different forms of perfection are developed in each. The perfection to which each individual is to be led on is that which will fit him for his special vocation and predestined place in the Body of Christ, so that we all may attain at last ' unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ ' (*Eph.* iv. 13).

That was S. Paul's aim. And he knew that it was possible ; for it did not depend upon anything outward or accidental that might seem to give one person an advantage over another. It depended simply on the fact that each one in baptism had received a new life, that Christ and His Spirit dwelt in each, and therefore each was called to be, and could really be, a saint.

This was S. Paul's conception of his work. And the same is set forth in our Ordinal. ' Wherefore consider with yourselves the end of your ministry towards the children of God, towards the Spouse and Body of Christ ; and see that you never cease your labour, your care and diligence, until you have done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are or shall be committed

to your charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life.'

That, no doubt, is a standard beyond our reach in large town parishes with a shifting population ; but in country parishes it ought not to be impossible. Anyhow, it is well to set the Church's standard clearly before us, and to ask ourselves whether we are trying to attain to it.

II. The Individuality of our Ministry

God deals with us individually as well as collectively. He has an individual purpose and love for each one whom He creates.

The Church also deals with her children one by one, in Baptism, Confirmation, Absolution, Holy Communion. In these sacraments the fruit of Christ's redemption is brought home to individuals.

Think how much of our Lord's time was spent in dealing with individuals : how careful and sympathetic He was in meeting their several needs, e.g. the two disciples of the Baptist who followed Him, Nicodemus, the woman of Samaria, Zacchaeus, the family at Bethany (*S. John* i. 39 ; iii. 1–21 ; iv. 5–26 ; xi, xii ; *S. Luke* xix. 5). Think of His training of the Apostles : the last year of His ministry was almost wholly devoted to this. It would be good to study carefully these and other instances of our Lord's dealings with individuals in the Gospels. They will be found typical of many of the cases we shall have to deal with, and we shall learn from them the secret of our Lord's method.

Or think of S. Paul's ministry. His too was largely a ministry to individuals. Speaking of his work at Ephesus, he says, ' Ye know how I have taught you publicly, and *from house to house* ' ; and again, ' Remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one (ἕνα ἕκαστον, each several one) night and day with tears ' (*Acts* xx. 20, 31). Notice also the numerous personal salutations and remembrances in his letters, e.g. Romans xvi; 1 Corinthians xvi ; Colossians iv ; 2 Timothy iv. What an amount of individual care and love they represent !

So, if our work is to bear fruit, it must be largely an individual work. We too must deal with our people, not only publicly in church, but 'from house to house.' We must get to know them one by one, their characters, their circumstances, their difficulties, their temptations, their good points and their weak ones. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep individually (*S. John* x. 14, 27). His pastorate regards each particular sheep in the flock. So it must be with ours, if it is to be really fruitful.

III. Helps for our Ministry

For so great a work, so lofty an aim, what shall help us?

1. *Love.* This will give us the key which will open hearts to receive our message. It will give us insight, sympathy, tact, and will help us also to persevere in spite of rebuffs and disappointments. But it must be true love—love, as S. Ambrose says, 'without selfishness, partiality, or carnality.' It must be love for all, not only for the few who are naturally attractive.

2. *Reality.* We must not rest satisfied with a well-organized parish and an outward conformity to religious practices among our people. Our work is to win souls for Christ, to convert them, to teach them penitence and prayer, to build them up, to lead them on to such perfection as God calls them to. So we must be real in every part of our ministry:

(1) *Real in visiting*, both the sick and the whole, remembering always that we visit them as priests, bearing with us a presence of Christ, and speaking in His Name. We shall not always find the opportunity to speak directly of religion, but we must be always on the watch for opportunities and ready to use them when they come.

(2) *Real in preaching.* We must prepare our sermons and instructions carefully, so as to give solid and methodical teaching both in the faith and in the practice of religion. We must have first-hand experimental knowledge of the truths we preach, then we shall be able to make them real to others. We must preach not merely because something has to be said, but because we have something

of real worth and importance to say—a word received from God for His people.

(3) *Real in the confessional*, using to the full that great opportunity of dealing intimately with souls; neither lax on the one hand, nor rigorous on the other, in our treatment of them.

3. *Patience.* We must give people time to grow, bearing with their dullness and inconsistencies, leading them on gently, watching over them and praying for them, but not over-driving them (*Gen.* xxxiii. 13, 14).

4. *Prayer.* Think of the High Priest entering the sanctuary wearing the breastplate on the stones of which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (*Exod.* xxviii. 15–21, 29). It is the type of the Christian priest as he stands at the altar to intercede for his people. Much, ah! how much more than we sometimes think, depends upon our prayers for our people, or our neglect of them!

5. *Hope.* We must be hopeful about our people, even those who to the natural view seem most unpromising. We must see them as God sees them, not as they are at present, but as they are capable, through grace, of becoming. We must never discourage any one by letting him see that we think him a hopeless case, but always try to make him hope for himself.

Hopeful also about ourselves, hopeful of growing in spiritual power, hopeful because of the power of God which is pledged to us. We must be sure that along with the burden of responsibility which ordination lays upon us, God gives us strength to bear it, and the gifts we need for it.

So let us set before us the true aim of our ministry—'to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.' We shall not, of course, accomplish this. There are wills that refuse to the last to yield to the grace of God. Still let us cherish the aim. It will help us to value each soul committed to our charge, to labour for it, pray for it, hope for it; and, while we do so, to commit our cares and anxieties to God, who watches over each soul, and meets the needs of each with all the resources of His infinite wisdom and love.

Imitation of Christ, I. xi; III. liii.

THE PRIEST'S JOYS

PREL. i. S. Paul's abounding joy : so characteristic a feature of all his Epistles.

Prel. ii. Pray that our Lord would pour His own joy into your heart (*S. John* xvii. 13).

Joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Earthly religions point to future joy as their aim : the religion of Christ, as it brings to us the gift of the Spirit, is full of present joy. Consider some of the joys which every faithful priest may rightly look for in his life and work.

I. IN HIS PERSONAL LIFE WITH GOD

1. *The daily Eucharist.*

A priest begins the day at the altar. Day by day, or almost every day, there is that wonderful meeting with our Lord veiled in His sacramental Presence, but so real to the vision of faith. Day by day, the pleading of the great Sacrifice including the oblation of himself in union with It, and then the sweet embrace of Communion. What must this be for the priest who habitually lives in the friendship of Jesus ! What manifold graces, what depths of peace and consolation, belong to that morning hour when the priest meets his Lord at the altar !

2. *The daily Office.*

Twice a day, or seven times if he says the Little Hours also, the priest comes before God to offer the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of his lips (*Heb.* xiii. 15). And he does this not merely as an individual seeking to lead a devout life for himself, but as one whom Christ has called to act in behalf of the whole Church. The Divine Office is the prayer of the universal Church. Though we may often have to say it alone or with only two or three to join us, we are never really alone. It is always in the communion of saints that we say it, and in union with Christ our Lord.

We ourselves may sometimes be cold and dry, unwilling to make the effort : then let us remember that we do not

say the Office for our own gratification, but for the glory of God and the needs of His Church. We must say it, therefore, in union with Christ, the Head of the Church, and then it will be He who will speak through us. Think what it is to have Christ thus speaking through us to the Father, filling our words with the sweetness of His own merits. Our devotion is to spring out of His, not out of ourselves. If we did but realize how truly Christ takes our words and speaks through us to the Father, we should find our daily office not a burdensome obligation to be got through as a matter of dull routine, but a source of refreshment, light, and joy.

3. *Mental prayer.*

That half hour or more, if it may be so, of intimate communion with God in which we feed upon the grace of our Communions, while we speak out of our hearts to Him, and listen for Him to speak to us. This too will be one of our joys: and an increasing joy as we are led on by the Holy Spirit to more interior and spiritual kinds of prayer, the prayer of affection and the prayer of simplicity. No doubt there will be times of dryness and darkness, when God seems far off and we feel unable to pray. But even then, if we persevere, we shall find that by these times of darkness God is preparing us for higher gifts of prayer. 'Though the vision tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry' (*Hab.* ii. 3). It will come in due time; the day star, the interior vision of Jesus, will arise in the heart (2 *S. Pet.* i. 19; 2 *Cor.* iv. 6; *Gal.* i. 16). And how necessary this is for us! 'Without contemplation,' says Père Lallemant, 'no great advance will be made in virtue and we shall never be able to help others towards it. . . With contemplation, we shall do more for ourselves and others in one month, than we shall do without it in ten years.'[1]

4. *Intercession.*

What fresh interest and happiness this too brings into our work! How all our intercourse with others comes to

[1] *Spiritual Doctrine*, Principle VII. iv. 4. Under the term 'Contemplation' he would include the prayer of simplicity, sometimes called active, or acquired, contemplation.

life when we have prayed for them! Sympathy, love, understanding, reliance on the power of God, and joy, are fruits of intercession. Faber says that joy is its special recompense.[1] God will bountifully reward with a joyous spirit those who diligently practise it.

II. In his Pastoral Work

1. *Joy over the innocent*: over children in the freshness of baptismal grace; over those who have grown up to youth and to maturity without losing the state of grace. As we baptize an infant, or teach a class of children whom no serious sin has yet separated from God, how it awakens in our hearts penitence, and a longing to regain purity ourselves! Or when we see young men and women growing up in the unsullied grace of God, how beautiful a sight it is! How it fills us with joy and stirs us to give praise and thanksgiving to God!

2. *Joy over the penitent*: over the conversion of some sinner returning to God. Some one, it may be, who has lived for years in sin, hard, unapproachable, defiant. And then some day, we know not how, the grace of God has found an entrance into that soul. Was it some word we spoke in a chance conversation, or some little act of kindness we were able to show in a time of sickness or trouble, which has made an opening for God into that heart so long closed against Him? Is not this a joy which amply rewards us for all the sorrow, toil, and prayers, that long-sought soul has cost us?

3. *Joy in the perseverance of the faithful and their advance towards perfection.* How full S. Paul's Epistles are of this joy! 'What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and our joy.' 'What thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God?' (1 *Thess.* ii. 19; iii. 9). These are but two examples out of many. Everywhere, as S. Paul looks back over the Churches he had planted or visited, he sees faithful souls that are his crown

[1] *All for Jesus*, chap. IV. v.

and rejoicing. So there is the joy of the priest over all the faithful of his flock, especially those in whom he sees the beauty of real holiness.

4. *Or, go higher still. Think of the joy of our Lord.* Think of His joy in the innocence of little children, in the return of penitents, in the perfecting of saints. Think of the joy of our Lord in every Baptism, Absolution, Communion. This is the true source and foundation of the priest's joy. It is the joy of Jesus overflowing into the priest's heart. It is the answer to our Lord's prayer on the night of His Passion, 'that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves' (*S. John* xvii. 13). We ought indeed to feel this joy of Jesus as we minister to our people, who are also, and first of all, His. We ought to feel it as we baptize, or give Absolution or Communion. So often we do these things in a perfunctory way, without any consciousness of the joy of Jesus in which He desires us to share. That is because we do not stir up our faith to unite ourselves with Him in all the work of our ministry.

5. *And lastly, think of the joy of a good death.* Surely if any one may look for a holy and peaceful death it is the faithful priest. All his life has been a preparation for death. Death is no stranger to him. He has faced it often in his meditations, and in the many to whom he has ministered on their death-beds. He has faced it and prepared for it, and even learnt to welcome it, 'having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ,' yet willing to abide till Christ shall call him (*Phil.* i. 23).

So let me think of the joys and blessings of the priest's life, and thank God for my vocation, and pray Him to grant me perseverance, and to bless my work more and more to the end; to give me many souls as the fruit of my labours now, and my crown of rejoicing in the great day of reward.

Imitation of Christ, III. xxxiv.

DEVOTION TO CHRIST CRUCIFIED

S. Ignatius would have us strengthen and confirm whatever resolutions we have made in our retreat by the consideration of 'the great and wonderful example of the Passion of our Lord and Saviour. For in the Passion all His virtues shine out far more conspicuously and gloriously, and more powerfully invite us to imitate Him. So that a great treasure lies hidden here. Accordingly we see that all the saints have exercised themselves chiefly in the Passion, as appears from the writings they have left. Therefore also the exercitant ought to be well instructed how to meditate upon it, seeing that it ought to be the ordinary food of his soul' (*Directory* xxxv. 1).

My retreat will not have fulfilled its purpose, nor shall I have gained all the fruit I ought to gain from it, unless I come and kneel with Blessed Mary and S. John at the foot of the Cross, in order to renew in myself this fundamental devotion to the Passion of Jesus.

Prel. i. Contemplate our Lord upon the Cross, and think of His words, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me' (*S. John* xii. 32).

Prel. ii. Pray for a true and deep devotion to Christ crucified.

Three considerations in particular ought to stimulate our devotion to the Passion of Jesus.

I. This Mystery draws the Heart most powerfully to the Love of our Saviour

It will be enough here to call to mind and meditate upon the great words of S. Paul: 'The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them, and rose again' (2 *Cor.* v. 14). This is the great argument which the saints have ever loved to apply to themselves individually, as S. Paul did: 'I live;

yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me ' (*Gal.* ii. 20).

The Eucharist may help us to realize this. It brings home to us how our Blessed Lord gave, and continually gives, Himself and all the virtues of His Life, Death, and Resurrection wholly to each one of us :

Sumit unus, sumunt mille,
Quantum isti, tantum ille.

A thousand do not receive more than one, for each receives the whole. So in His sacred Passion, what Christ did and suffered is all for *me*, to atone for *my* sins, to give *me* hope and courage and strength and new life, to waken *my* heart to love and thanksgiving, to open *my* eyes to the worth of *my own* soul, to kindle in *me* a zeal for the salvation of others.

So day by day as I go to the altar to offer the perpetual memorial of our Lord's great Sacrifice, I will renew my devotion to His Passion, offering myself a sacrifice to God in union with Him, and praying that I may love Him as He has loved me.

II. The Mystery of the Cross heals all the Disease of our Souls

I have only to look to the crucifix to be convinced that I must no longer live a life of softness, sloth, and self-indulgence. I ought to be ashamed to be the delicate member of a thorn-crowned Head, to live a soft and sensual life while my King so willingly ' goes for my sake to His Passion.'

Behold Him buffeted, struck, spit upon, scourged, bearing His Cross on the way to Calvary, falling beneath its weight, nailed to it, and dying thereon in bitter pain. From these sufferings there flows a virtue able to heal all the diseases of our souls : the fever of lust, or pride, or ambition ; the paralysis of the will induced by habits of sloth ; the blindness of the understanding, the deafness of the inward ear to God's voice, the proneness of the natural heart to earth and the things of earth. We speak of these diseases as various ; and various they are in their forms ; but they have all

one root in the corruption of our fallen nature. Sins are many, but sin is one : and the remedy for each and all of them is one and the same, the contemplation of the Cross, devotion to the Crucified, the grace of the Passion.

The crucifix as we look upon it, like the brazen serpent in the wilderness, heals the wounds of our sins, and is the antidote to the poison of sensuality, pride, anger, avarice, and all other evil passions, with which sin has infected us.

We cannot contemplate Jesus on the Cross and keep these evil passions in our hearts. But when we grow cold and lose our devotion to the Cross, then at once these moral and spiritual maladies begin to assert their power within us.

III. The Mystery of the Cross reminds us that our Ministry must involve Sacrifice and Suffering

The end of a priest, his mission to the world, is to save souls, to convert and sanctify them. But it is evident that he cannot hope to discharge this mission in any other way than the great High Priest, whose agent and minister he is, discharged it. He must be *alter Christus*. Like Christ, he must be both priest and victim. That is the cost at which he must purchase power with God, and gain the grace of conversion for the souls committed to his charge. It is under these conditions alone that he will have power to win souls. Hearts will be moved by his likeness to Christ crucified more than by all his sermons. 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.' The words are as true of the priest as of his Master. If the priest bears the impress of the Cross he will draw souls to Christ.

Am I convinced of these essential truths? Or do I not rather refuse to contemplate them?

Do I not shrink from suffering and mortification of every kind?

How far am I a disciple of the Crucified?

Have I anything of the spirit of a victim?

Let me ask myself these searching questions as I kneel before the Crucified.

Alas, O Lord, how little has been my devotion to Thy life-giving Passion! Let it be so no longer. Do Thou from

this moment implant in my heart the memory, the love, the likeness, of Thy Passion.

And now, still kneeling at the foot of the Cross, I will resolve, as some little way of growing in this devotion :

1. Often to meditate upon the Passion, not so much by way of considerations and imagination, as by a loving contemplation of the Sacred Heart. We grow like that which we are constantly beholding.

2. Sometimes, perhaps each Friday, to use some special devotions to the Passion, e.g. the Litany of the Passion or of the Sacred Heart, the Way of the Cross, or some of those deep devotions in Part vi of the *Paradisus Animae*.[1]

3. To institute, if possible, some of these devotions in my parish, teaching my people to make them alone in church, or sometimes myself leading them in corporate acts of worship.

4. To accept all sufferings and humiliations that may come to me for the love of Jesus, in reparation for my own sins, and the sins of my people, and of the whole Church.

Great opportunities of suffering for Christ may not be for such as I am. But there are many little opportunities which can be used by every generous soul ; little acts of mortification ; the sacrifice of one's own will, tastes, and natural inclinations ; not complaining when I have good reason to do so ; putting up with the faults of those I have to live with.

It is by using occasions such as these that I shall grow in devotion to Jesus crucified. ' If you have a real desire to find and possess Jesus,' says S. John of the Cross, ' do not attempt to seek Him without the Cross.'

[1] There is an English translation, *The Paradise of the Christian Soul*, edited by Dr. Pusey, and published by Parker.

Imitation of Christ, II. xi ; IV. viii.

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

PREL. i. Think of the presence of Jesus in your own heart after Communion.

Prel. ii. Pray for an increase of faith in this holy mystery, and of reverence, love, and devotion in the use of it.

I. THE PERSONAL PRESENCE OF JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

He is present both as God and as Man. As God He was always present in the world. 'All things were made by Him' (*S. John* i. 3). 'He is before all things, and in Him all things consist' (*Col.* i. 17). From the beginning the Eternal Word pervaded all things by His essence, presence, and power. He was therefore always present. But not as the incarnate Word is now present. The Incarnation introduced a new kind of presence. 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us' (*S. John* i. 14). And His Presence in the Blessed Sacrament is a fruit of His incarnate presence.

It is the presence of the same Lord Jesus with whom His disciples had been familiar and who had appeared to them after His resurrection. The same, not indeed in mode and condition, but the same in substance and reality.

He has withdrawn His visible form, but he has come to us in a new way, not now conditioned by time and space, but present simultaneously on every altar where the Blessed Sacrament is celebrated or reserved; present as really, though in so hidden and mysterious a manner. The Apostles saw Jesus. They saw His sacred manhood, His Godhead they could not see. From us His manhood too is hidden, but we see the Bread and Wine, the veils which hide Him, and we know that He is there. When we take the Blessed Sacrament into our hands we are in contact with Jesus. We behold Him with the eye of faith: beyond this there is nothing but the unveiled vision of the saints in glory.

Who can tell the wonders and the glory which this

sacramental presence enshrines ! We can never exhaust its treasures. Always the mystery will have something more to unfold to us, some fresh experience for us to learn : Jesus in whom are contained all the treasures of grace and truth, all the personal experiences of the past, the sympathy of the present, the glory of the manifestation yet to come.

II. His Gift of Himself to us

He gives Himself not merely to be with us but in us, that He may dwell in us and we in Him, that we may partake of His substance, that, dying to our old sinful nature, we may live more and more in Him. Think of this sacramental union of Jesus with us. It is :

1. *Most real.* 'As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father ; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me' (*S. John* vi. 57). His union with us is so real, so intimate, so vital, that He can liken it to His own union with the Father.

2. *Most loving.* He comes to us in spiritual power to make us one body and one spirit with Himself. Even the mother is separate from the infant at her breast ; but Jesus makes us one with Himself in a true unity of life as we feed upon His Body and Blood by the power of the Holy Ghost. We must therefore receive His gift with spiritual apprehension : only so can we know the reality and love with which He gives it.

3. *Most generous.* He gives Himself not partially but entirely, not His gifts only but Himself, His Body, Soul, and Divinity, all that He is and has. All that we can receive He longs to impart. He holds back nothing because of any unwillingness on His part, only we so little open our hearts to receive. O most generous heart of Jesus, may we at last give all our hearts to Thee !

4. *Most condescending.* He lays aside all outward tokens of His glory, that we may not fear to approach and receive Him. He bears with all our dullness of faith and want of love, till we grow stronger and are able to bear the fullness of the union which He longs to effect.

5. *Most wonderful in transforming power.* While we feed on Him He is not changed into our substance, but we are transformed into His. 'This sacred bread when eaten is not changed into our substance, but rather changes us into itself, unites us to itself, and makes us like itself' (*S. Augustine*). The power of God coming to us through the human nature of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, meets the wants of our nature in each of its faculties with the grace we need, and should lift us up into a life worthy of Himself. Great must be our joy if we do indeed yield ourselves up to His transforming power.

III. The Purpose of the Gift

He gives Himself to us in order that He may transform us into His own likeness: that He may make each one of us another Christ, *alter Christus*,—all that marked His life reproduced in us.

1. *His humility.* When I receive our Lord I receive the grace of His humility to show it forth in my life. As He humbled Himself, so He comes to be a principle, a source of humility in me; that I may be content to be hidden, unknown, little accounted of, set aside; that I may bear contrary things with patience; that I may be ready to take the lowest place and to serve others.

2. *His poverty*; that I may be detached from earthly things; content with little; ready to bear hardships; poor in spirit; ministering to Him in His poor.

3. *His purity*; that my sinful body may be made clean by His Body. Bodily temptations need not keep us away, if we are really striving against them.

4. *His obedience*; to Joseph and Mary; to those in authority; to the will and providence of God. This too I receive to manifest it in my life.

5. *His prayer*; that I may be able to pray as He did. Through the Blessed Sacrament He will give me, if I ask Him, the gift of prayer, grace to persevere in prayer, to pray in the Spirit, in the prevailing power of His Name.

6. *His strength and firmness*; as when He vanquished

Satan in the wilderness, endured hardness, suffered even unto death. All this strength is given to me that I may resist temptation, endure suffering, be faithful if need be even unto death.

7. *His love for souls.* Think of the love of the Sacred Heart for all the souls of men. And now He wants to win souls through me. He wants to make me love as He loves. Shall I not pray often for this fruit of the Blessed Sacrament, that I may have the true pastor's heart, the love of souls, the power to win them for Christ.

8. Lastly, *His risen life.* As He rose in spiritual power, so He comes to impart His glorious life to us ; that dead to sin and to the world we may live in the power of His victorious life, and that our bodies also may be prepared for a glorious resurrection, because within them there is, as a seed of the glory that is to be, the risen, immortal, glorious Body of our Lord.

Take these or any other characteristics of our Lord's incarnate life which may best suit your needs, and think how in the Blessed Sacrament you receive in Jesus just what you need.

Think how He longs to impart Himself. How He comes as the Good Physician who can lay His finger on the very spot where lies the weakness of our nature. How in all the discipline of His earthly life He has developed in His sacred humanity grace to meet all our needs.

Bow down before Him ; worship Him ; give Him thanks for all He has given, all He still longs to give. Open thy mouth wide and He will fill it. He will make you stronger than all your enemies. He will make you ever more and more what you would wish to be, what He intends you to be, a Christian, a Priest, not in name only, but in reality and power.

Imitation of Christ, IV. xiii, xvi.

APPENDIX I

ADDITIONAL MEDITATIONS

BY MEANS OF WHICH, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THOSE PRINTED IN THE FOREGOING RETREATS, A VARIETY OF OTHER RETREATS MAY BE ARRANGED. SOME EXAMPLES OF SUCH ARRANGEMENTS ARE GIVEN IN APPENDIX III.

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THE RIGHT DISPOSITIONS FOR RETREAT

1. ' He who comes to make the Exercises ought, in the first place, to endeavour to understand how great a matter it is which he is undertaking : a matter which not only concerns his soul, but concerns it in such a way that if only he is diligent in doing his part, he will lay foundations for his spiritual advancement, which will be found profitable in all his after life. From this he may understand what earnestness, diligence, and courage he ought to bring to so great a work. Therefore let him make up his mind to play the man, to put away all hindrances to divine grace, and to apply all the powers of his soul to co-operate with this grace, and to dispose himself as perfectly as he can to receive it.

2. ' To further this end let him first free himself from all his domestic affairs, and for the whole time let him forbid himself all intercourse with others, and even all messages and letters. For these are wont to fill the mind with many distractions, and to chill whatever fervour he may have gained. Rather let him endeavour to shut out every other thought, whatever it may be concerned with, just as if he had no other business in this world.'

For the same reason let him not be looking into many books, but besides the Bible and the *Imitation of Christ* let him choose some one book suitable to a time of retreat, a spiritual book or a biography, and keep to that only.

3. ' Then let him have a great hope in the goodness of God, who, since He seeks even wanderers, and follows after those who flee from Him, will much more receive and embrace those who come to Him with hearty goodwill. Let him therefore put his trust in that infinite clemency which, as it has given him this good desire, will also give him grace and strength to bring it to good effect, seeing that His will is our sanctification.

4. ' Amongst other dispositions also he ought to be willing and eager to make these Exercises, not so much in order to enjoy spiritual sweetness, as that he may learn the will

of God concerning him, and withdrawing his affections from all earthly things may fix them upon his Creator. And above all, it is necessary that, besides this desire of spiritual progress, he should be wholly resigned to the will of God in those things in which he is still free,[1] and thus be fully prepared to do whatever he shall come to know that God would have him do.

5. 'Wherefore no one ought to bring with him any settled purpose from which he is unwilling to be moved. Nor should he set any limit to the grace of God, in such sort that he is willing to receive light and help within certain limits, but no further. For not to mention the impropriety of a creature acting thus towards his Creator, such a course is most harmful to the man himself: first, because he thereby deprives himself of those greater graces which God was perchance about to give him; and secondly, because his lack of generosity, and his grudging and ungrateful temper towards God, deserve that he should be refused even those graces which he would wish to receive. He ought, therefore, rather to open his heart, desiring to unite himself as closely as possible with God, and to be enriched and filled to his utmost capacity with all heavenly treasures. Such should be his behaviour towards God.

6. 'Towards him, on the other hand, who is to give the Exercises, he ought to bear himself as a pupil towards his master and guide in this difficult journey; and therefore, even if in other respects he should be a man of prudence and learning, and well-skilled in affairs, yet during this time let him not trust to his own prudence and learning, but surrender himself wholly to his guide, and as the Apostle says: "Let him become a fool, that he may become wise" (1 *Cor.* iii. 18); and let him follow the admonition of blessed Peter: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 *S. Pet.* ii. 2). Accordingly let him look upon his director as an instrument of God sent to him to direct and conduct him along the way which leads to eternal life. Therefore he ought to receive with reverence, readiness, and confidence the instructions which are given him' (*Directory* ii).

[1] e.g. free to enter upon the religious life if God should call him to it.

Ponder these instructions well, and then make the following short meditation.

Prel. i. ' Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while ' (*S. Mark* vi. 31).

Prel. ii. Jesus calling His disciples into retreat with Himself.

Prel. iii. Pray for grace to make this retreat to the glory of God and the profit of your soul.

I

' *Come ye apart.*' In the manifold activities of a parish it is so difficult not to lose sight of one's own soul. Jesus knows this, and in love and mercy He calls me apart that alone with Him I may consider the one thing needful.

' *Into a desert place.*' I will make my room my desert cell. I need not fear the solitude. Jesus will be my Companion and my Teacher. He it is who invites me. He has something to say to me, something that I have not heard or understood before. He has some gift to bestow, some further vocation perhaps in which I may follow Him more closely.

' *And rest a while.*' The rest of retreat is not idleness or inactivity but the quiet needed for prolonged meditation and prayer. I have come into retreat to make *The Spiritual Exercises.* My retreat is to be a real work, a personal work ; not addresses to listen to, nor points to read over in a cursory manner with a few brief reflections, but *meditations to make.* I am to use my own mental and spiritual powers in meditation, self-examination, prayer. I am to conquer myself, to free my soul from all desires and attachments which conflict with the true end of my creation, the love and service of God, and then with a free heart I am to seek and to find the will of God in the ordering of my life with a view to the sanctification and salvation of my soul. That is to be the work of my retreat.

II

I may need this retreat for one or more of several reasons, e.g. :—

1. Some sin, known or unknown, may be hindering my

spiritual life and work, and I have hitherto not seen it or have not had the will and courage to deal with it rightly. The retreat, if I make it well, will bring me light and courage to know the hindrance and to put it away.

2. Deadness and formality in devotion, or weariness and slackness in duty. In my retreat I will seek for renovation of spirit, for fervour and perseverance.

3. Some change in my way of life or sphere of work which it may be advisable to make, and I want to know God's will about it.

4. A call to take some step onward in spiritual life, which will cost effort and perseverance.

5. The consideration of a possible call to mission work abroad, or to the religious life.

6. Or simply for the deepening and security of my present life and work.

In all these cases a retreat will help, bringing light to know God's will, and grace and courage to obey.

III

This retreat may be the last I shall ever make. How many have come into retreat and have not cared to make the best use of it, because they thought they would have other opportunities in years to come. But for some of them it was their last opportunity, and they wasted it. What if this should be my last retreat? If I knew that it would be so, how earnestly I would try to make it! Face to face, then, with God I will resolve to make this retreat with all the perfection that I can, and to do whatever He shows me to be His will. He will give me the grace and courage that I need. He desires and wills my sanctification and salvation. I will pray Him to give me grace to desire and will it too with all my heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. And then, whether in dryness or in consolation, I will trust myself to Him, with the sure confidence that I shall not be disappointed of my hope.

Imitation of Christ, I. xx; III. liii.

THE FIRST ANNOTATION

S. IGNATIUS begins his book with twenty *Annotations* which explain the nature and purpose of the Exercises, and how they are to be adapted to different classes of persons. They are intended chiefly for the guidance of conductors of retreats, but some of them are useful also for retreatants. The first of them will furnish some thoughts for our introductory meditation.

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

S. Ignatius says : ' As to go for a walk, to take a journey, and to run, are bodily exercises, so under the name of spiritual exercises is to be understood every method of examination of conscience, of meditation, of contemplation, of vocal and mental prayer, etc.'

' To go for a walk, to take a journey, to run '—the ideas expressed by these words may easily be transferred from bodily to spiritual exercises. Thus, there are many who go through their spiritual exercises, prayers, self-examination, meditation, in such a way as never to make any real progress. They neither overcome their faults nor acquire solid virtues. And the reason is that they are like men who merely walk up and down for the sake of exercise, returning again to the point from which they set out. They go through their prayers, self-examination, and meditation, in an aimless way, merely to satisfy their consciences that they have not omitted them, but without any definite end in view. If they make any resolutions, they are feeble and half-hearted, and when the time comes for putting them into practice they forget them, or have not the will to carry them out. Thus, after many half-hearted and ineffectual desires, they remain just what they were at the beginning. They make no progress.

Others, on the contrary, keep the end always in view. They look upon their spiritual exercises not merely as duties to be got through, but as means to overcome themselves and their sins, and to make progress in the life of grace. It is these who advance in the spiritual life, and sometimes with

such swiftness that they may be said to run, and even to fly rather than to walk; according to the words of the prophet, 'They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary' (*Isa.* xl. 31).

How am I going to make this retreat? As one that merely saunters on an aimless ramble, or like one who takes a journey with a definite end in view; or better still, as one who runs in a race, striving with all his might to reach the goal? (*Phil.* iii. 13, 14). It is in this last way that S. Ignatius would have me enter upon my retreat, with a serious purpose and an ardent desire to press onward in correspondence with the grace God will give me, and towards the end to which He calls me.

II. The Purpose of these Exercises

1. 'To prepare and dispose the soul to rid itself of all inordinate affections.' By an inordinate affection is meant any attachment, desire, or inclination which is a hindrance to one's end—the love and service of God and the salvation of one's soul. The first purpose, then, of the exercises of a retreat is to get rid of those sins and unruly passions which are the chief hindrances to our choosing the will of God and running the race that is set before us.

2. 'After the soul has rid itself' of these inordinate affections, then the second purpose of the Exercises is to help the soul 'to seek and to find the divine will in the ordering of one's life with a view to the salvation of one's soul.' The words 'after it has rid itself' are not, however, to be understood as if a complete uprooting of our evil passions was meant, which is often the work of a lifetime, but rather of such mastery over them that they shall not hinder us from ordering our life according to the purpose and will of God. Till we have conquered ourselves so far as this, we shall have neither the light to see what is God's will for us, nor the courage and strength to carry it out.

'To seek and to find.' *To seek* is our part, *to find* is the gift of God; but it will certainly be given to those who seek. 'Seek and ye shall find' (*S. Matt.* vii. 7).

'With a view to the salvation of one's soul.' The

salvation here spoken of is not merely the soul's escape from hell, but all that growth in grace which God has designed for each one of us in this life and in eternity.

It is with good reason, then, that S. Ignatius speaks of the Exercises as '*preparing and disposing*' the soul for all this. For it will not be accomplished in a single retreat. Still, those who put their whole heart into a retreat do often gain immense fruit, and are carried forward a long way upon their journey. Many have gone out from a well-made retreat to live an altogether new and changed life, and, by the grace of God, have persevered and made progress in it to the end.

III. Dispositions Required

1. *Remember that God has His purpose for you in this retreat.* It is He who has brought you here. He means it for your good. He has prepared some great blessing for you. Do not miss that blessing by any carelessness or fault on your part. Try to-night, at the outset, to realize the solemnity and importance of your retreat. You cannot leave it just as you came to it. You must be the better or the worse for it. You will have to answer for it at the day of judgement.

2. *Desire to know God's will for you.* Ask Him earnestly to show you what it is, and to give you grace to do it, whether it be the re-ordering and amendment of your whole life, or some step onward God invites you to take now, or His vocation for you in the future. 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' 'Speak, for Thy servant heareth.'

3. *Be generous and courageous, ready to do all that God asks of you, whatever it may cost you.* He will not ask more than you can give. He will give you grace equal to the demand. Remember the words of Blessed Mary to the servants, 'Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it' (*S. John* ii. 5). They obeyed, and the water was changed into wine. So will it be with you: the blessing will be beyond all that you can ask or think.

4. *Be patient.* If you are tried with weariness, distractions, spiritual dryness, distaste for prayer, temptations of

whatever kind—it is Satan trying to hinder God's work in you, and to rob you of the blessing you will obtain, if you persevere.

5. *Determine to make the retreat well, so far as depends on yourself.* Follow its rules exactly—the silence, the meditations, the prayers. Try resolutely to put away all thoughts that do not belong to the retreat. Read only what may help you. Ask the advice of the priest who is directing your retreat about this. Be open and honest in all your dealings with him.

6. *Think of this retreat as if it might be a preparation for death.* You may never have an opportunity of making another. If you knew this to be the case, how earnestly you would try to make it well; to set right anything in your past life that troubles your conscience; to be honest and sincere with yourself and with God; to give yourself wholly to Him.

What you would wish to have done when you come to die, resolve to do now.

Imitation of Christ, I. xx.

THE END OF MAN

'MAN was created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.'

I. GOD IS MY CREATOR

I, who have come here into retreat in order that I may know what God would have me to do, and through His grace may once more put myself into the right relation to Him—I was created by God. I did not come into being by chance, or the will of my parents, except as the instruments of God's will and purpose, still less by my own will; but by the will of God. My body was fashioned by God in my mother's womb, my soul created, brought into being out of nothing, and infused into my body.

Moreover I am utterly dependent upon God. Every moment He upholds me in being, gives me life, the use of reason and free will, all the faculties and powers of my body, mind, and soul. I cannot use any of these powers without His concurrence.

Thus let me think of what it is to be a creature. I come from God. I am the work of His hands. Therefore I belong to Him, and am every moment dependent upon Him.

Now let me consider some circumstances of my creation.

1. *God created me out of pure love.* He had no need of me, as though without me He lacked anything. God was not a solitary unit so as to need me or any other creature for companionship. He was infinitely blessed and happy in the mutual knowledge and love of the three eternal Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In God Himself was the fullness of all knowledge, love, and life. I could add nothing to it. Creation is a mystery we cannot fathom. We can only dimly think of it as the eternal love of God overflowing beyond His own Being, and desiring to create other beings who might share His love and bliss, and might love Him in return.

2. *The decree of my creation was from everlasting.* From all eternity God thought of me, and purposed to bring me

in due time into being. I was nothing, yet I had a place in the thoughts and heart of the eternal God. He loved me, and had His purpose for me.

3. *God created me with a special, individual love and purpose,* endowing me with all that makes up my own individual constitution, temperament, capacities. He must have foreseen in me some special thing upon which His love rested ; some capacity to make a return of love to Him, which no other among His creatures could make ; some particular work for me to do for Him, which only I could do ; some place for me to fill in His plan, which only I could fill. And if I refuse or fail, He must create another to take the place which I have forfeited.

4. And not only has God called me into being : *He has also raised me to the supernatural state,* making me His child by adoption and grace, that I may partake of His own life, and hereafter share His eternal happiness and glory. And this too He purposed from eternity (*Eph.* i. 4–6).

II. My Response to God

God, because He has created me, cannot be indifferent to the use I make of the life and faculties He has given me. He must look for some response from me, which shall be worthy of Himself, and worthy also of the nature He has given me, and the state of grace to which He has raised me. What ought my response to be ?

' Man was created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord.' This is the response I am to make to my Creator.

1. *I am to praise God :*

In word, by the utterance of praise in the public services of the Church, and in private devotion.

In heart, by loving Him in all things and above all things ; surrendering myself wholly to Him in filial love and dependence ; ready to receive at His hands whatever He may appoint for me, and to confess that He is good, in adversity no less than in prosperity.

In act, by seeking in all things to promote His honour and glory.

2. *To reverence Him.* Reverence is both internal and external. Internal reverence includes a profound sense and acknowledgement of God's majesty and my own nothingness, a constant recognition of His presence, and that holy fear which is a gift of the Holy Ghost.

External reverence is the outward expression of that which is internal. It should manifest itself in respect for all the ordinances of religion, and in the care with which I take part in them; in boldly confessing my faith before men; in humility and modesty in all my behaviour.

3. *To serve Him*, i.e. always and in all things to do His will and not my own. And this service which I owe to God includes: (1) keeping His commandments; (2) fulfilling the duties of my state and calling in life; (3) the ordering of my life, not according to my own wayward impulses, but according to His will; (4) if I am not yet fixed in a state of life and am at liberty to make a choice, a serious deliberation as to what He would have me choose.

This service, though in itself most honourable and full of sweetness, seeing that God always wills what is best for His creatures, may at times be difficult and painful to our corrupt nature; but it is always in our power aided by grace. What peace and security this should give me! God does not require that I should succeed in what I try to do in obedience to His will; but only my good will, my faithful attempt to do the best I can. And that good will He is always ready to give me in answer to prayer. If success were to be the measure of my service, I might often despair. But God does not measure my service by my success. If I have done what I could, that is the service He requires. I have fulfilled my end—my immediate end, my duty to God in this present life.

III. The Salvation of my Soul

This is my ultimate end, my end in the life to come. What is there I can put in comparison with it? What other object in life can have any value for me if I do not save my soul? 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain

the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' (*S. Mark* viii. 36, 37).

Salvation, think what it means! Not merely to escape hell, though that were worth every effort and sacrifice; but to be set free from all sin and possibility of ever sinning again; to be made perfect, capable of companionship with saints and angels, and with God Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; to enter into every possible kind of happiness and joy of which a sinless and perfect human nature is capable, ever advancing in the knowledge and love of God! And all this for ever, without satiety, and without possibility of loss or diminution.

Dwell on this; and then consider that there is a necessary connection between these two things, the praise, reverence, and service of God and the salvation of my soul. If I serve Him now, I shall save my soul: I shall lose it for ever if I live for self and for the world. Let me see to it, then, that I am bringing to the service of God my whole heart.

And as the service of God is the necessary condition of my salvation, so is it also the only thing that can make me happy even in this life.

Fallen man loves to be his own master, to be independent, to act according to his own will. Here is the source of all his misery. He seeks himself, and is unhappy. He pursues his own ends, and is restless and unsatisfied. He indulges his passions, and becomes their slave (*S. John* viii. 34). On the other hand, to serve God is to enjoy peace and freedom. It is to win the victory over self, the world, and the devil, to be superior to all creatures; to have no other master but God, '*cui servire regnare est.*'

O my God, I am not my own, but Thine. I come from Thee. I belong to Thee. I depend upon Thee for everything. Thou art the Eternal Love, and desirest the response of my poor love. Help me to know Thee better, to love Thee more, to serve Thee truly in this life, and hereafter to be with Thee for ever in the joy of heaven.

GOD'S PURPOSE IN MY CREATION

PREL. i. Contemplate a ray of light from God resting upon thee at thy birth, and containing in itself the whole predestination of God, all the purposes which He has for thee, to raise thee out of thy nothingness into His own glory.

Prel. ii. Pray that you may ever walk in that light; or, if you have wandered aside into the darkness, that you may now return with penitence and renewed hope.

I. AN INDIVIDUAL PURPOSE

God's purpose in the creation of man was, and is, the glory of His eternal Son, and though that purpose was thwarted for a while by the fall, nevertheless it was not to be set aside. God would accomplish His work in the fullness of time. By multiplied individualities He would accomplish what the failure of Adam, the first head of our race, had marred. Each separate person is born into the world in order to carry out some particular part in the original plan which God had predestined for the human race.

Think of thyself born into the world with this divine purpose. Who can measure its greatness, or imagine that place in the heavenly temple which thou art destined to fill? It is beyond all thy powers to conceive. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him' (1 *Cor.* ii. 9). The eye must be enlightened by the Holy Ghost if it is to comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the divine glory which is our predestination in Christ. There is not one of us that comes into the world with any predestination short of the divine glory. God does not predestinate us to great works on earth as the end of our creation, but to Himself, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, to be perfect as He is perfect (*S. Matt.* v. 48).

I was formed to be perfected in the image of the Incarnate Son. No lower destiny can be mine. If I could be borne to the height of angelic glory, that would not suffice. My

destiny is higher than that of the angels. In Christ I am to be perfected according to the glory of the Divine Sonship.

Think of each child born into the world with such a glorious destiny. As the Divine Word was in time to be made flesh and act in our nature, so God created manifold personalities to carry out the purpose which He willed to accomplish. The destiny of each individual is a part of the destiny of the Incarnate Word. Each of us is born to be a living stone contributing some form of beauty to the living temple of humanity in which God shall delight to dwell.

Consider, then, the purpose of God for thyself. Do not be distracted by thinking of God's purpose for others. Say not, ' Lord, what shall this man do ? ' but listen as it is said to thee, ' Follow thou Me.' All God's purposes are contained in this one word, ' Follow thou Me.' There can be no purpose outside that call, no attainment of anything to which that Word does not call. All the possibilities of thy being are contained therein, and they can only be made good in the line of God's original purpose for thee. If thou followest thine own preference, thine own plans and ideas, thou wilt wander out of the way, and mar what God meant thee to be. Only in following the divine call canst thou be kept in the line of God's purpose and attain thine own true development.

II. My Failure

The spiritual life of man from his birth may be represented as a road which falls within a beam of light cast upon it. So long as we keep to the straight road we abide in the light, but if we turn aside we pass into darkness. The beam of light is God's predestination, His purpose for us, and we must keep in the straight road if that purpose is to be fulfilled. We must walk in the light. We know not what we may come to as we pursue the road, but so long as we keep to it the light will be there to guide us. We are in the way of God's predestination, and our life cannot fail of its true purpose.

If we fail it is because we do not walk in the light. We wander aside from the straight road of God's predestination into ways of our own choosing, which lead only to blind alleys or to quagmires and morasses in which we stick fast

or sink and are lost. How many lives fail in this way! How I have failed myself! How often I have gone my own self-chosen way, followed my own fancied light, and it has led me into darkness and many dangers!

Let me think what my life might have been if I had always been true to the light; how the purposes of God might have been fulfilled in me. And now, alas! what is it? A life so marred, so cumbered with disabilities by reason of my wilfulness and sins. How much of it has been darkness and not light, because it has been out of the line of God's predestination and loving purpose for me. It is my own fault. God does not create any soul to fail. His will is that all should be saved (1 *Tim.* ii. 4), and not merely saved but sanctified, i.e. that we should consecrate ourselves (1 *Thess.* iv. 3).[1] And this we can still do in spite of our past failures. For God's purpose has not changed, and His mercy is everlasting.

III. God's continuing Purpose

Yes, in spite of my failure God's purpose for me is still the same. Weak and powerless as I am in myself, God's voice is still calling me on. It bids me rise up now and do what I can. It bids me strengthen what remains, and then He will give more strength. His voice still speaks within me with all the fullness of creative power, and therefore with the fullness of hope. God can yet accomplish His work in me, if I will but yield myself to Him. His purpose of changeless love endures. And for the realization of this purpose God has given me not only the light which lighteth every man as he comes into the world (*S. John* i. 9) but also His Holy Spirit that I may have power to walk in the light. Think what this gift is. The Holy Ghost is a Divine Person. His presence is a Personal presence bringing to us divine life and divine assistance. He comes to us from the Father through the glorified Humanity of the Incarnate Word, anointing all our faculties that we may be able to live and act worthily of God, and so attain the glorious purpose of our creation.

Think also of the intercession of Christ. As the Incarnate

[1] ἁγιασμὸς ὑμῶν implies a process of self-consecration.

Son of God, He pleads for us with a love equal to that of the Father, knowing, asking, receiving, giving forth, all that the Father wills for each one of us, until the full purpose of the Father's predestination is accomplished in the perfecting of the mystical Body of His Son, and of each individual member thereof. How, then, can we fail when God has given us such abundant helps?

Dwell, then, on the necessity of corresponding with the will of God in order to rise up to the fullness of His purpose. We must be true to our vocation. We must not doubt the possibility of attainment. It is the voice of God that calls each one of us, and that voice is a creative voice. As it calls it gives power. It will also prepare the way before us, the way we are to walk in. The valleys shall be exalted, the mountains made low; the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain (*Isa.* xl. 4), that we may go forward in the way of God's predestination. There will be difficulties. We must expect them more, it may be, and greater, as we advance. It is a way beyond human power to tread. But let us not fear them, so as to be kept back by them. Difficulties are nothing to God. We can have no idea at the beginning what the divine assistance will accomplish in us as we persevere. Only one thing need we fear, to remain what and where we are. We must go forward. We must advance in the way of our vocation, in the way of God's purpose for each one of us. We must give ourselves up to Him to be transformed according to the fullness of the divine predestination, to attain at last the divine perfection. 'Ye shall be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.'

Nothing short of this is the end of man, the purpose for which God created each several individual of the human race. If I fail God must create another soul to take the place that I have forfeited. His purpose in my creation is the glory of His well-beloved Son, and that glory cannot be fulfilled till the number of the elect is made complete, each in his appointed time, and place, and manner.

Imitation of Christ, I. 1; III. ix.

THE CHARACTER OF GOD

PREL. i. Moses in the mount desiring to see the glory of God (*Exod.* xxxiii. 18).

Prel. ii. Pray that you may have a like desire. O Lord, I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.

In contemplating so transcendent and sublime a subject as the character of God we must limit ourselves to a few only of His glorious perfections: His Holiness, His Wisdom, His Love.

I. THE HOLINESS OF GOD

This is the thing of all others which is essential to the Being whom we are to worship.

Think for a moment what it would be if the God whom our religion taught us to worship was not a holy God. Men have worshipped gods of their own imagination who were not holy; they have worshipped gods in whom all the evil passions and vices of their own nature were found 'writ large.' Many do so still. But for us, who have known God as He has revealed Himself to us in the Incarnation, and by His Holy Spirit, it is plain that holiness is essential to a God whom we are to worship. So we have been taught from the first to pray 'Hallowed be Thy Name.' This is the first prayer, and lies at the root of all prayer and all worship.

Our deepest need is to believe in One whose Name, i.e. whose nature, is holy. For if God were not holy, how could we worship Him? How could we pray to Him? Could we worship one or pray to one whom we felt to be tarnished, in ever so slight a degree, with our own sins and imperfections? Could we give ourselves to such a one? Could we acknowledge Him as our end, for whom we were made, and in whose service we are to find ourselves purified, blessed, ennobled? No, unless God were perfectly holy He could never satisfy our deepest and most lasting needs.

And, if holiness is essential to God, it is also essential to us, essential to our intercourse with God. 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord' (*Heb.* xii. 14); essential if we

would rightly approach God in worship and prayer : ' lifting up holy hands ' in prayer (1 *Tim.* ii. 8).

And what sort of holiness ? A holiness which is complete complete, that is, as far as it goes, a holiness which admits of no compromise. We cannot compensate for sin in one direction by holiness in another, for indulgence in unholy thoughts and tempers by correctness and even strictness of outward conduct. We cannot compensate for one allowed sin by manifold apparent virtues. ' Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend ' deliberately ' in one point he is guilty of all ' (*S. Jas.* ii. 10), for he shows that his heart is not right with God, is not seeking after holiness.

So in retreat we must ask ourselves, are we following after holiness ? We need to examine ourselves not merely about isolated sins, but about the whole attitude and bent of our lives. Are we endeavouring to rise up to the demands of that complete holiness which the holy character of God demands ? Let us see that there is no toleration of any known sin. That there is the desire and the effort to advance in the way of holiness. This lies at the threshold of retreat. It is useless for us to have come here, come to seek God whose character is perfect holiness, unless we want to be made holy, cleansed, set free from sin ; and set forward once more, and still further than ever before, in the way of holiness.

II. The Wisdom of God

God makes no mistakes in dealing with us. He knows perfectly what we are, for He made us. He knows the character and capacities, the strength and the weakness of each one of us. He knows also all our past history and development, all the influences that have gone to shaping us, all our present circumstances, difficulties, temptations, opportunities, and powers.

And His wisdom and knowledge are not distracted by the multiplicity of things to which He gives His attention, nor perplexed by the complications of their manifold interaction. His consciousness embraces all the vast universe of things, and yet is as careful of each individual person as if he were the only one He had to care for. So we may rely upon His wisdom in the ordering of our lives

If we give ourselves to Him, we enter at once a haven of security. He will make all things work together for good to them that love Him (*Rom.* viii. 28). So often we distrust that ; we think we must make ourselves secure, and so we try to plan and arrange things for ourselves, and very likely make a sad mess of it. How much better and wiser to give ourselves up in simple obedience to the love and providence of God. Then He will make all turn to our good and His glory.

So let me give myself to God in my retreat with renewed trust in His unfailing wisdom. I am sure that He has a purpose and a plan for me, though I cannot always see it. And even if my wilfulness and my sins have frustrated much of it hitherto, yet even this—all my past folly, failure, wilfulness, and even sin—His wisdom can overrule for my good, when once I trust Him and obey His present call.

III. The Love of God

See how all this is lighted up, and gains new force and power, if we think of that which is the crowning revelation of the nature and character of God in S. John's phrase, ' God is love.'

We know what love is because we are capable of loving. We know something of its strength, its tenderness, its power of self-sacrifice. We know how it cannot rest till it receives love in response to love. We know it is the deepest thing in our own nature.

But all we might say about love, all we have ever felt in ourselves, or experienced from others, falls far, far short of the love of God, the love which God is, the eternal, uncreated Love. Love is not one attribute amongst others in God, it is the very substance of His Being. All His other attributes are attributes of Love. The holiness of God is the holiness of Love. The wisdom of God is the wisdom of Love. The omnipotence of God is the omnipotence, the universal lordship of Love. Whatever God does, it is Love that does it.

So I will think of God who is Love. I will think what the will of the eternal Love means in regard to myself. From eternity Love formed a purpose for me as lovely as Itself. And God does not change. That Love is still streaming

forth to me, still calling me to Itself. And that purpose for me has not changed. It is still as strong and fresh as ever. Whatever have been my failures and sins, the love and wisdom of God can take even these and weave them into His plan for me, and make them work together for my good, the moment I give myself to Him in penitence and trust His love.

Holiness, wisdom, love—let me think of these as being the essential character of God, who is my end, and who is now calling me to Himself. I am not lost to His consciousness among the millions of others that have been and are. God sees me and cares for me, and for each of all those other millions, as if each were the only one He had to care for. He is as intimately, as unceasingly, present to each, as if each were the only one.

And His purpose for me is unchanging. Still, as at the first, He wills for me that which is most for His glory, and my own eternal happiness and good. Still, in spite of what I have made of myself by my own wilfulness and sins, His will is my sanctification (1 *Thess.* iv. 3).

And His wisdom cannot fail. He knows all. He makes no mistakes. He can bring good even out of evil. I have but to give myself to Him, to trust Him, and that moment His wisdom will make all things work together for my good (*Rom.* viii. 28).

And all this purpose, and this wisdom, and this will, are the purpose and the wisdom and the will of infinite and unchanging Love, for God is Love (1 *S. John* iv. 16).

Imitation of Christ, III. iv, ix, xxxiv.

THE END AND RIGHT USE OF CREATURES

AFTER speaking of the end of man, 'to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord,' S. Ignatius continues, 'and the other things on the face of the earth were created for man's sake, and in order to aid him in the attainment of the end for which he was created.'

Prel. i. Contemplate God in His providence ordering all things with infinite wisdom and love for the good of each individual soul.

Prel. ii. Pray that you may use all creatures to the glory of God, and for the sanctification and salvation of your soul.

I. CREATURES ARE FOR MAN

By creatures, 'the other things on the face of the earth,' S. Ignatius means not only the various objects of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms of this visible world, but also all events, circumstances, states, and conditions of life, all the arrangements of God's providence, all, whether in the order of nature or of grace, that makes up the setting and environment of our life.

It is true that God made nothing evil or painful, but many things which were good in themselves have become evil and painful to us because of the disorder brought into our nature and into the world by sin. Still, even these things may be rightly said to be creatures of God because they have now entered into the new order of His providential government of this fallen world. He ordains or permits them for His glory, and for our sake, to aid us in the pursuit of the end for which we were created.

All creatures, then, understanding the word in this wide sense, are means and never ends in themselves. They have no true value in themselves, but only as they may help us to glorify God and save our souls. Therefore the only right rule with regard to them is that we should use them, or abstain from them, just so far as they help or hinder us in the attainment of our end.

Think of our Lord's use of creatures, and also of His abstinence from many of them; His rejection of riches, worldly honour, power, and success; and His choice, instead, of poverty, humility, hiddenness, and the Cross. Think how He met all events, circumstances, experiences, those that were happy and joyful, and those that were sorrowful and painful; how He accepted everything for the glory of the Father and for love of us.

Think what peace and security this truth about creatures might give us if we were thoroughly and practically convinced of it. All the circumstances and events of our several lives are ordered and planned, or overruled, by God in such a way as shall best enable us to glorify Him and save our souls. It would be folly to think that we could arrange things better, if we had the choice. What is our wisdom compared to the wisdom of God? What is our love of ourselves compared with the love God has for us? What is any idea of perfection we could form for ourselves compared with the perfection God designs for us, and to which He will surely lead us, if we give ourselves up with simple trust and self-surrender to the discipline He appoints for us?

What a sure and solid ground we have here for all acts of resignation to the will of God in trials and difficulties, and even for the joyful acceptance of them, because we are sure that they are the very things by which we can best serve and glorify Him, and attain to that perfection to which He calls us.

II. Indifference or Detachment

If we are to use creatures or refrain from them as our Lord did, and as right reason and faith demand, we must '*make* ourselves indifferent,' i.e. we must keep our wills free and detached, ready to accept whatever God appoints for us by His good providence, and to choose always those means which will best enable us to fulfil our end, the glory of God and our own salvation.

S. Ignatius does not say we are to '*be* indifferent,' but to '*make ourselves* indifferent.' To 'be indifferent,' i.e. not to feel desire or repugnance with regard to creatures, is not always in our power, and is therefore not required of us.

But we are so to rule and moderate our natural inclinations and desires that they shall not hinder our freedom to choose and act always according to conscience and the will of God. Indifference is not stoic apathy nor insensibility, but detachment from creatures and self-mastery in the use of them.

This habit of indifference can only be established and maintained by a dominant preference which enables us to put aside other desires inconsistent with it. This dominant preference is the love of God above all else. So long as this is preserved, then whatever is loved in God and for Him is not inconsistent with indifference. Indifference excludes only that love for creatures which conflicts with the dominant love of God. All other loves and natural affections it elevates and consecrates by making them tributary to the supreme love, the love of God. But at the same time this supreme love of God can only be maintained and developed when due indifference or detachment from creatures is cherished.

Thus it is that we are to 'make ourselves indifferent,' so as to be able to use creatures not according to our own wayward impulses, but according to right reason and the will of God. This will take time and effort. We shall have to practice mortification and self-denial, bending our wills again and again to the will of God, till at last we come to want only what God wants. Then we shall be able to use all creatures aright, as means to attain our end, the love and service of God and man and the salvation of our souls.

III. Some Fruits of Indifference

1. *A great security.* For God will guide and take care of the soul that desires in all things only to do His will. He will make ' all things work together for good to them that love Him ' (*Rom.* viii. 28), even things that might naturally seem to be nothing but hindrances. ' There are no obstacles to those who love God ' (*Père Grou*).

2. *Great peace of soul.* ' Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee ' (*Isa.* xxvi. 3). ' What is more restful than the single eye ? and who more free than he that desires nothing upon earth ? ' (*Imitation of Christ,*

III. xxxi. 1). The single eye is the eye that in all things looks beyond the creature to the end for which the soul was created, the love and service of God.

3. *Contentment.* 'When a man attains to this, that he seeks not his comfort from any creature, then doth God first begin to be perfectly sweet unto him; then also shall he be well content with whatever doth befall him. Then will he neither rejoice in great matters nor grieve for small; but entirely and trustfully throw himself on God who is unto him all in all' (ibid. I. xxv. 9).

4. *Freedom to advance in the way of prayer.* 'Unless a man be detached from all creatures, he cannot freely fix his mind upon divine things' (ibid. III. xxxi. 1). 'Nothing so stains and entangles the heart of man, as impure love to creatures' (ibid. II. i. 8), where by 'impure love' is meant undue, inordinate love, a love of creatures not as means to the end, but as ends in themselves. But when the soul is simplified and pure because it looks through all creatures to God, who is its end and only real satisfaction, then God is able to reveal Himself and flow into that soul, and teach it the secrets of the inward life. And as detachment from creatures and mortification in the use of them fits us for advance in prayer, so in turn every advance in prayer will make detachment and indifference in the use of creatures easier. They will lose their hold upon us, and we shall not desire them or cling to them except so far as they help us to attain the end upon which our hearts are set, progress in the love and service of God.

5. When a soul by long practice of mortification and self-discipline has attained to a good measure of detachment, God may give back to it (as we see in the lives of many saints) a power to use and enjoy creatures without being hindered by them, because now all creatures are seen in God and God in them. Such a power is often a result of a faithful perseverance in the Purgative Way, for the beatitude of the pure in heart is that they shall see God—see Him not merely hereafter in the Beatific Vision, but here and now in the wonder and the beauty of His works and ways.

Imitation of Christ, III. xxxi.

THE END OF A PRIEST

PREL. i. Our Lord saying to His Apostles, ' As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you ' (*S. John* xx. 21).

Prel. ii. Pray that our Lord would renew in you the spirit of your vocation, filling you with such love and zeal that you may be a priest after His own heart.

I. THE PRIEST'S WORK

The end of every man is to glorify God and save his soul : the end of a priest is, besides this, to be our Lord's instrument in saving the souls of others. ' To rescue souls from the world, and give them to God, is the proper work of a priest,' says S. Anselm. And S. Chrysostom, ' If a priest has sought to save his own soul only, while neglecting others, he will be thrust down with the wicked into hell.'

This is our end, our vocation. We are called to work together with God for the salvation of souls (θεοῦ συνεργοί, 1 *Cor.* iii. 9). All our life, our work, our studies, our ministrations, are to have this for their end, to bring souls back again into union with God, or to bring them increasingly into closer communion with Him.

This work is partly evangelistic, and partly pastoral. On the one hand it is evangelistic, ' to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for His children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever ' (*Ordinal*). On the other it is pastoral, ' for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ ' (*Eph.* iv. 12, 13).

To this twofold end we are to ' draw all our cares and studies,' ' laying aside the study of the world and the flesh.' To this end we are to ' be diligent to frame and fashion our own selves and our families ' (if we have them), ' according to the doctrine of Christ ; and to make both ourselves and them wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ ' (*Ordinal*).

Thus it is that the priest must look out upon the world and realize that he is called to glorify God in his own life, and by the conversion and edification of others.

II. The Perfection to which the Priest is called

The priestly state is a state of perfection. 'Ye shall be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect' (*S. Matt.* v. 48). Though these words were spoken to all, they were addressed in the first instance to the Apostles. They especially were called to perfection inasmuch as they were sent to perfect others (*Eph.* iv. 12). How could they teach others the way of perfection, unless they were themselves walking in it?

And if the Apostles were called to perfection, so is every priest. That is the ideal set before us. It is beyond us, but we must be striving after it. Perfection, so far as it can be attained in this life, does not consist in sinlessness—for who is without sin?—but first, in freedom from mortal sin; and next, in such a hatred of all sin that we would never deliberately commit even a venial sin; and thirdly, in 'a glad and deliberate choice of a life in the spirit of poverty, humility, labour, and the Cross.'[1]

The obligation to strive after this interior spiritual perfection does not rest upon religious only. It is incumbent on priests also—upon priests indeed even more than upon religious, inasmuch as they are more exposed to the dangers and temptations of the world, and are more directly called to the care and edification of others.

Think of these other words of our Lord spoken again primarily to the Apostles: 'Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?' (*S. Matt.* v. 13). To be the salt of the earth signifies 'the personal possession of the sanctity which resists corruption, and communicates the same resisting power to others by contact and influence.'[2] But for this purpose the priest must be in some way separate from the world. Men must feel that he is different from the world, and has a savour of his own. The salt which has lost its savour is the priest who has lost the 'savour of Christ,' and is not striving after sanctity.

[1] Manning, *The Eternal Priesthood*, chap. iv. p. 41. [2] ibid., p. 44.

So let me ask myself about my relations with the world. Do I impart the savour of Christ to the world, or does the world impart its savour to me?

O blessed Jesus, Thou wast, indeed, salt to a corrupt and perishing world. Be so to me, and to Thy people through me.

III. Considerations Urging us to Holiness

1. *The greatness of our responsibility.* The Ordinal bids us to 'have always printed in our remembrance, how great a treasure is committed to our charge. For they are the sheep of Christ, which He bought with His death, and for whom He shed His blood.' And it goes on to warn us of 'the greatness of the fault and the horrible punishment that will ensue, if it shall happen that the Church, or any member of it, take any hurt or hindrance by reason of our negligence.' It would be good on the Ember Days to read over the Ordinal, and examine ourselves by it.

2. *The Mysteries amid which we move.* In the Church of God we are everywhere surrounded with 'powers of the world to come' (*Heb.* vi. 5). Nothing that we do or say in our ministry can be insignificant or commonplace. Day by day we go in to 'stand before the Lord' (2 *Chron.* xxix. 11) at the altar, or in choir to recite the Divine Office. Any day, at any moment, we may be called upon to speak or to act in the Name of God: to rebuke, to exhort, to comfort the sorrowful, to visit the sick, to hear a confession, to carry the viaticum to the dying. The priest must so live as to be always ready for any of these ministrations. How can he do these things with a good conscience unless he constantly remembers the supernatural character of his calling and work, and the heavenly mysteries with which he has to deal?

3. *The passing away of time.* 'I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work' (*S. John* ix. 4). So our Lord spoke of His own ministry. Let me meditate upon His words with reference to myself. Old age—if I live to be old—will soon overtake me; old age in which the senses are dulled, the limbs slow, and the brain less active, and then will come

death. Now, I go about my parish, in and out, and opportunities are given me. Now, I teach and preach in the church. A few years at most, and another will succeed me. Day by day, as I pass through the churchyard and see the graves of my predecessors, let me think of the day when I shall be laid to rest beside them, and of the account I must give of my life and ministry in the parish.

In that day my account will be closed ; the work done, and the work left undone, will be registered for ever. If any souls might have been converted, and I was silent ; might have been instructed, and I neglected them ; might have been saved from peril by holy counsel, and I did not give it : then I must bear the blame. The night will have come upon me in which I can no longer work, however much I may too late desire to do so.

O my lost hours, which have run up into weeks, and months, and years, how shall I bear the thought of you then ? O my neglects, my lack of faith, and prayer, and zeal ! Let me face this now, before it is too late. Let me pray that I may use better the time that God may yet in His mercy give me.

Imitation of Christ, III. x ; IV. v.

DEATH

ANOTHER of the things S. Ignatius would have us ask for as a fruit of the Exercises of the First Week is 'a knowledge of the world, in order that, fearing it and shrinking from it, we may put away from ourselves worldly and vain things.'

The contemplation of death will help us here. It will help us to bring home to ourselves the transitory nature of the world and all that is in it. 'The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life'—these are what the objects of the world awaken in us; but death will end them all, and that very soon.

I. WHAT IS DEATH?

We think about it, we preach about it, we hear of it or see it almost daily. We often say Mass for the dead, or officiate at a funeral; sometimes too we meditate upon death. Do we realize that we shall one day pass through this great experience ourselves?

Contemplate your own death. What will it be? It will be a complete separation from this world and all that is in it. 'We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out' (1 *Tim.* vi. 7), nothing but ourselves and the results upon those selves of our contact and dealing with all that has been so close to us, so much a part of our lives here.

Death will separate us from our relations, friends, acquaintances, those we have ministered to, or who have ministered to us.

Death will separate us from our employments, from the work or the study in which we are so interested, from the plans we hope to see carried out.

At present we wish for so many things, success, respect, honour, to hold such and such a position, to have such and such a work entrusted to us, to carry out certain plans which seem to us so important; but death will break in upon all this, and put an end to it. Death will show us that these are not the real things, the things that feed and enrich our real life. 'Vanity of vanities' is written upon them

all. In themselves they are emptiness, nothingness, creatures which have no value except as means, in the use of which, or by abstinence from which, we may seek the love and service of God, and the salvation of our souls. Nothing is real and solid but to love God, and attach ourselves to Him.

II. The Certainty of Death

My life in this world is full of uncertainties. Shall I live many years or few? Shall I accomplish this or that? Shall I have more of happiness or of sorrow, of success or of failure, of fame or of obscurity? Who can tell, or even guess with much probability of being right?

But there is no uncertainty about death; unless indeed our Lord should come again while I am still here on earth. With that one possible exception, death is certain. I do not doubt it, though I find it hard to realize in my own case. Death always seems so far away from ourselves. But it may be much nearer than I think. What is my age, thirty, forty, fifty years? I have already lived in the world longer than a large portion of the human race, and how quickly the years have slipped away. Many younger and stronger men die every day. How much longer remains for me?

The thought of death ought not to be unwelcome to a good Christian, especially to a priest. Surely for a good Christian death is not so much a punishment, though indeed we deserve that it should be such, as an act of sacrifice, the last and greatest we can make to God. To die to the world, to give up myself and all to God—why, surely that is the truth of my life in Christ. I am, or I ought to be, dead to myself and to the world now. Death is only the consummation of a sacrifice which I have already made in heart and will. But I must make this consummating act, when it is called for, with all the perfection that I can.

So I will hope and pray, that if it be God's will He may make this last act of sacrifice full of consolation and even of great joy to me. He did so for His Blessed Mother. He has done so for countless others who were not, like her, without sin. He has done so not only for great saints, but for great sinners who were also great penitents. He has done so for numbers of His faithful servants.

Or if, as sometimes happens even to the holiest, there should be a time of darkness and temptation as the end draws near, let me pray that I may still have trust and confidence in God; that He will not suffer me, at my last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from Him. Surely I may trust Him. He will not suffer me to be tempted above that I am able. I shall be safe in the hands of God, those hands that made me, that have guided me through life, that were pierced for me upon the Cross, that have so often been outstretched to bless me. 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me' (*Ps.* xxiii. 4), with me in the darkness no less than in the light.

I will not, then, be troubled as to when and how death may come. It will come when God wills; and I may be sure, if I love Him, that it will be at the best time and in the best way.

III. Preparation for Death

But if I am to have this confidence in the hour of death I must make all my life a preparation for death. I must be dying daily to self and to the world. Think of this daily dying in a soul that is constantly keeping itself free from the entanglements of selfishness and sin, and from all inordinate attachments to transitory things. Think of the heart watchfully kept from all that might tarnish purity, so that the inward eye has been always learning to see God more and more. Think of the days well spent, the prayers in which the soul was really seeking after God, and rising up to Him, often, no doubt, through much darkness of thick clouds, and buffeted by winds and waves of temptation, but for all that not ceasing to press on to God. Think of the faithfulness in duty, the charity towards others, the habitual forgetfulness of self. Are not these the things which should be daily leading us on towards a holy death? 'Keep innocency and take heed unto the thing that is right; for that shall bring a man peace at the last' (*Ps.* xxxvii. 38).

Yes, it is in practising to die daily to self and sin that I shall find the secure way to a happy and holy death at the last. And am I not, as time goes on, more and more sure that only in this direction lies true peace and happiness, even for

the short years of my life in this world? Nature, indeed, may shrink from this mortified life, this daily dying to self, and sin, and the world; but when I think of the really mortified souls I have known or read of, do I not see that out of this dying there springs a new life of love and joy and peace? The splendid guess of Euripides, *τίς οἶδεν εἰ τὸ ζῆν μέν ἔστι κατθανεῖν, τὸ κατθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν*,[1] 'Who knows if this life be not death, and death the real life?' which was greeted with ridicule by the comic poets of his time, has become for the Christian an assured truth, not only in its ultimate realization in the life to come, but in the daily experience of the faithful here and now. The Christian as he dies to self and sin, finds evermore an entrance into a higher, richer life in Christ. Death, as the agent of Satan, can strike the blow, when God permits, which separates soul and body, and makes us die whether we will or no. But there is another death which the will accomplishes by the power of grace, a death which separates not soul from body, but separates both from sin, and enables us to experience here and now the true life which we have in Christ.

Thus, then, let us meditate upon death.

1. The separation which it will bring from the world and all that belongs to the world—from all the transitory things of time and sense.

2. Its certainty, and the swiftness of its approach—many of us have lived by far the greater part of our life already, and death cannot be very far away.

3. And lastly, the way to prepare for it by detachment from the world, by a faithful fulfilment of our duty to God and to man, and a daily dying to self and sin.

And let us try to make the prayer of Bishop Ken's evening hymn the daily expression of our true purpose and desire, as we draw, one by one, towards the evening of life.

> Teach me to live, that I may dread
> The grave as little as my bed.
> Teach me to die, that so I may
> Rise glorious at the awful day.

[1] Nauck, Trag. Grae. Fragm., p. 560. cf. 1 Tim. vi. 19: *τῆς ὄντως ζωῆς*.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxiii.

SIN, JUDGEMENT, AND PENITENCE

PREL. i. Myself as a criminal about to appear before my Judge.

Prel ii. Pray for true and deep contrition

I. REVIEW OF LIFE

I am to enter into judgement with myself, reviewing the chief sins of my life down to the present moment; not indeed searching them out in detail as if preparing for a general confession, but in a summary way as a help to deepen shame and contrition.

In order to do this I will place myself in the presence of our Lord, remembering that He will one day be my Judge. And then, to help me in my review I will call to mind the places in which I have lived, the persons with whom I have been familiar, the temptations which have beset me, the trains of thought and imagination which I have habitually indulged, the employments in which I have been engaged, the aims which I have cherished, and the motives upon which I have acted.

This need not take long, but it will reveal to me something of the number and gravity of my sins, and will fill me with shame and sorrow, and it may be with fear, for the many times and ways in which I have wounded the love of my Lord, and marred His good purpose for me.

Thus let me think of my sins, and especially of those committed since my ordination. I will think what I might have been if I had been true to the grace given me, and what alas! I have made of myself.

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

1. *The consequences in this present life.* 'The wages of sin is death' (*Rom.* vi. 23). Death, not merely of the body, which comes upon all by reason of Adam's sin, but spiritual death, the death of the soul in the loss of God, who is the life of the soul (*S. John* v. 24; 1 *S. John* iii. 14).

Let me think here of the inherent deadliness of sin. All sins do not indeed issue in the soul's death at once, but all

contain within them an element of death, a weakening of the soul's life and health, which is a step towards death, and which by constant repetition may issue in the soul's death at last. There is no essential distinction between sin and spiritual death. It is a distinction of degree, not of kind. Spiritual death, 'the second death' (*Rev.* xx. 14; xxi. 8), is but sin's final development, and all sin is the beginning of this death.

So let me think of my own sins and the death and corruption they have worked in me—the weakening of the powers of my soul, the loss of love, of power to pray, of joy in God; the perversion of my affections, the strength of evil habits, the manifold hindrances to my life and work.

That, surely, is sad enough, and cause enough for lifelong shame and sorrow. But it does not exhaust the consequences of sin.

2. *There are consequences which will come to light and have to be faced in the future.* There is a judgement to come in which every man's life and work shall be tried by fire, the fire of the judgement of which S. Paul speaks, 'Every man's work shall be made manifest. . . . It shall be revealed by fire of what sort it is. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire' (1 *Cor.* iii. 13, 15), as a man is saved who narrowly escapes through the flames of his burning house, with loss of all his goods.

In the day of judgement, whether the particular judgement at the moment of death or the general judgement at the last day, there will be some, must we not fear many, possibly oneself among them, who will suffer loss. They have, thanks be to God, built on the one foundation Jesus Christ. They have not altogether lost the life of grace, but they have built thereon wood, hay, stubble (ibid. verse 12), which cannot endure the judgement fire. They will suffer loss.

Think what anguish this will be, this loss of what they had thought well done; what, if indeed it had been well done, would have had an everlasting reward.

Think of the soul as it passes out of this world, and in the particular judgement beholds our Lord, and in the light of His countenance sees, as it never saw before, what a fruit-

less life it has really led—its waste of grace, its lukewarmness, its self-seeking, all that was done out of vanity and human respect, the loss it must suffer because so many of its works were dead works. Will not that be suffering so intense that none could be greater, except to hear from the Saviour's mouth the sentence of final reprobation, 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels'? (*S. Matt.* xxv. 41).

And what if, as some fathers have thought, there should be a time of suspense? Saints and doctors have thought this possible, even not improbable.[1] What if the judgement be not a momentary act, or if moments then may seem like ages? What if that sight of ourselves in the presence of God should be protracted, so that the loathing of sin may be burned into the soul by the lengthened unfolding of the sins of a lifetime? And what if during this review the soul should be kept in suspense as to the issue? Truly there are terrible ways in which one who has built worthless materials, even on the true foundation, may have to suffer, escaping indeed with life, yet 'so as through fire.'

So meditate upon the consequences of sin, even forgiven sin, in this life, and beyond.

III. Penitence

Each act of sin changes, so far, our moral nature and affects our trial. Each leaves its effect upon the soul. So, when we repent, we have not only the corrupt nature we inherit from Adam to subdue, but the added evil and disability we have brought upon ourselves by our personal sins. And this evil nature, as we formed it by repeated acts of sin, so it is mostly little by little, by repeated acts of obedience in the power of grace, that God unmakes and remakes it. Step by step we have become what we are. Step by step by the grace of God we must return. It is a weary journey. But we make it more weary by not owning that it is now our appointed way, our one way of undoing the past and returning to God through His grace.

Let me not, then, despond because I am what I have made myself. Rather, having confessed my sins as fully as I

[1] See Pusey, *Lenten Sermons*, 1858–74, Sermon v, pp. 103 sq.

can, and received God's pardon, let me look away from myself to Him. Let me accept the weariness of the way as my due penance, and be thankful that I have something to suffer here rather than hereafter. Let me pray, as David in his penitence, 'Wash me more and more from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin' (*Ps.* li. 2). David had been forgiven, but he felt the need of continual cleansing, as though he never could be cleansed enough. '*Amplius lava me.*'

But see what hope there is in his penitence. 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' Yes, there is hope in all true penitence. 'Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.' Let me not waste time in brooding upon my misery. Let every pang of memory and self-reproach issue in a prayer to God for cleansing, and He will create in me a clean heart, till at last the old sin, which seemed so ingrained, shall be melted away in the fire of Divine Love, and a new heart created within me.

So let me seek for penitence which shall be as adequate to my sin as by the grace of God I can make it: a penitence which is indeed shame and sorrow for the past, but full of love and hope in the renewing power of grace.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxiv; III. xiv.

PENITENCE AND FORGIVENESS

PREL. i. David in his lifelong penitence (*Ps.* li. 2, 10–12). Think of this as his daily prayer long after he had received the assurance of God's forgiveness.

Prel. ii. Ask for an abiding sorrow for sin, even for forgiven sins. This lifelong, quiet, affectionate sorrow, says Faber, 'throws a tenderness into our whole character, and makes us deep and pliant. It brings with it the unction of that special gift of the Holy Ghost which is named "piety."' The want of it is 'the common cause of all failures in perfection.'[1]

I. PENITENCE

The real misery of sin is that its effects go so deep and are so lasting. Sin is a disease infecting our nature. But there is this difference between bodily diseases and spiritual: bodily diseases may be thrown off or outgrown, nature has wonderful powers of recuperation. It is quite otherwise with sin. Sin enters within the real self, and leaves results which neither time effaces, nor outward remedies reach. After a grave sin my outward life may go on as before, the principles I profess may remain the same, but I myself am changed. The whole constitution of my moral and spiritual nature has been affected by the sin. I am not what I was before I sinned. I cannot be as one who has not sinned. I cannot now respond to grace with the readiness of a soul that has kept its innocence from the first.

Here surely is matter for lifelong penitence—the burden of past sin, even though forgiven. The burden of all the disabilities and enfeeblements it has left behind, all that I might once have been, all that I might have done for God; and instead of that, the waste and ruin of so much of my life, the weakness and perversion of my moral and spiritual faculties. Here surely is matter for lifelong sorrow, the sorrow for forgiven sin, which is so emphatic a note in the lives of the saints; a penitence which made them feel that they were utterly unworthy of the love which God continued to pour upon them.

Thus it is with all true penitence. Sorrow for sin does not grow less as God's acceptance of the penitent becomes more

[1] *Growth in Holiness*, pp. 354, 362.

established, but the reverse. The more the penitent realizes the love of God, the deeper his penitence will become.

Perfect penitence indeed is impossible for us while sin still remains in us, because sin has weakened and deranged our moral and spiritual nature. But Christ, our Lord, by taking our sin-sick nature, has cleansed and healed it, and has become the source for us of a new humanity to which real penitence, a penitence which is going on to perfection, is possible. In proportion as we die to self and live in Christ, we become identified with His attitude towards sin. Our sorrow for sin becomes identified with His sorrow, our aspiration after holiness with His transcendent holiness.

So the question is not, Did I at one time in my life—at the time of my conversion, or my first confession—repent of my sins? but, Has my repentance been deepening ever since, my sorrow for all the sorrow and sufferings my sin has cost our Lord; my sorrow too for all the disabilities my sin has brought upon myself, the hindrances to my prayer and worship, to the better love and service I might have given to God?

So, in my prayer, I will stir up the desire to become more and more identified with Christ's sorrow for sin and with His perfect righteousness. I cannot, indeed, make the past not to have been: I cannot annul its miserable reality. But I can myself be transformed by grace, so that my attitude towards that past is utterly changed. I can be growing more and more into the mind of Christ about it, hating the evil as He hates it, sorrowing for it as He sorrowed in Gethsemane and on the Cross.

All this may be very imperfect in me as yet; but if there is the desire for it, and the beginning of it, then this germ of true penitence has in it the promise and potentiality of that perfect penitence into which I hope to grow.

II. Forgiveness

Forgiveness is not an arbitrary act of sovereign power without relation to the moral and spiritual condition of the person who has sinned. It is not the mere remission of punishment, but the restoration of the harmony that sin has broken. It is the answer of God's changeless love to the soul which penitence is changing; the living, growing

relation of God's love to the soul's capacity and fitness to receive it. It is the forgiveness of righteousness and truth : the forgiveness of the all-holy God, who sees in us the germ at least of the righteousness of Christ, a righteousness which really is in us, not indeed of our own working, but of His gift and our growing correspondence with the gift—a righteousness which, though not of us, is growing up, through the long discipline of penitent love, into the perfect righteousness of Christ, the Holy One of God. This is the consummation both of penitence and of forgiveness.[1]

And can we be content to aspire to anything less than this ? The hope of forgiveness which is not the hope of a heart set upon personal holiness, would not be a Christian hope. No, in our penitence we must hope for the highest, for the perfect transformation of ourselves at last into the perfect holiness of Christ.

Keble has portrayed this hope for us in some beautiful lines in the *Lyra Innocentium*, entitled ' Absolution.'

> Live ever in my heart, sweet awful hour,
> When prostrate in my sin and shame I lay,
> And heard the absolving accents fall with power,
> As soft, as keen, as lambent lightnings play.
>
> And sure with lightning glance they seemed to thrill,
> (O may the dream prove true !) and search and burn
> Each foul dark corner of my lawless will.
> What if the Spirit grieved did then return ?
>
> O fear, O joy to think !—and what if yet,
> In some far moment of eternity,
> The lore of evil I may quite forget,
> And with the pure in heart my portion be ?
>
> Live ever in my heart, dread blissful hope to tame
> The haughty brow, to curb the unchastened eye,
> And shape to deeds of good each wavering aim ;
> O teach me some true penance ere I die !

That is the hope of penitence : so to have learnt to hate the evil, so to have separated ourselves from it, and had it burnt out of us by the fire of the Divine Spirit of love and holiness, that at last it may be forgotten as if it had never been, and we are made pure in heart, even as He, our Saviour and our God, is pure.

We shall not, indeed, be able altogether to forget the evil while we are here in this world : it would not be safe for us

[1] See Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, pp. 62–72.

if we could. But meanwhile our hope and our prayer will be '*Amplius lava me*,' wash me more and more, till at length my stains are done away, and penitence is complete in perfect cleansing and renewal. Then forgiveness will be perfected in the divine embrace of the soul once sinful but now, at last, through the marvellous working of grace, capable of being perfectly loved by the perfect holiness of God.

So in hope I will pray, ' Wash me more and more from my wickedness ; and cleanse me from my sin. . . . Make me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me. . . . O give me the comfort of Thy help again ; and stablish me with Thy free Spirit. Then shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked ; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee ' (*Ps.* li. 2, 10, 12, 13).

III. The Ministry of Reconciliation

Penitent and forgiven ourselves we shall desire that others may partake of the same grace; and to us has been committed the ministry of reconciliation. We must exercise it in the spirit of Christ, with gentleness and compassion. The memory of our own first confession and absolution, and the thought of the many times since that we have sinned and been forgiven, must make us always ready to welcome returning penitents. It must make us gentle and compassionate however deeply they have sinned, or however often they may relapse.

Such kindness and tender sympathy need not make us weak or unfaithful to our duty as judges and physicians of souls. We must be firm, like the surgeon who has to cut deep, not sparing to give pain when it is needed, yet gentle and tender while he gives it. Freely we have received, freely let us give, yet with due caution and great reverence for the honour of Christ and of His Sacraments.

Let us ask our Lord to preserve us both from laxity and from undue severity; to give us such love and sympathy that none may fear to come to us and open their grief ; and such wisdom and prudence as is needed to meet the difficulties of so weighty and so delicate a ministry. And let us exercise our office always with a deep sense of our own sins, and of the marvel of God's forgiving and restoring love bestowed upon ourselves.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxi ; III. viii, lii.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

At this point of the retreat, as we pass from the exercises of the purgative way to those of the illuminative, S. Ignatius would have us meditate upon the kingdom and the call of Christ, that we may be ready to follow Him in His warfare against sin, the world, and the devil.

Prel. i. Contemplate Christ our Lord as the great Captain of our salvation (*Heb.* ii. 10), calling all men to follow Him in His warfare against sin, the world, and the devil.

Prel. ii. Pray that you may not be deaf to His call, but prompt and diligent to obey.

I. A Parable

Imagine a prince appearing in the world and calling upon all men to follow him. He comes to fight against evil and wrong of every kind, and to subdue the whole world to his rule of righteousness and peace. Though human he is appointed and sent by God, and has the promise of final victory. He attracts by the beauty of his character, and inspires confidence in every heart.

Yet there are toils and sufferings to be endured. Those who follow must be ready to bear all the hardships and dangers of war ; they must overcome their fears and sloth ; they must train themselves in all the exercises of warfare, and persevere to the end.

But their leader will go before them, and himself bear the brunt of every toil and danger. And the reward is sure : 'Each,' he says, 'shall share with me in the victory, according as he has shared in the toils.'

What ought every brave and true-hearted man to answer to such a call ? What should we think of any one whom cowardice and sloth held back ?

II. The Reality

There is such a Prince, our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Captain of our Salvation (*Heb.* ii. 10).

Think of Him. He comes into the world to vanquish Satan and deliver mankind from his tyranny. He comes wearing our human nature, exposing Himself to all our

weakness, temptations, and sufferings. Yet He is Divine, the eternal Son of God. Though in the weakness of our mortal nature, He is strong and mighty to save. Though He has suffered, He has triumphed. He has overcome the world, and death, and Satan. 'I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death' (*Rev.* i. 18).

Imagine Him standing before you and saying, 'Which of you will follow Me? I come to call all men to fight along with Me against sin, the world, and the devil. I desire to subject all men to the laws of My kingdom in order to bless them, and after My peaceful conquest I shall lead to eternal glory those whose chains I have broken, and whose hearts I have set free. Whosoever shall share in My labours and sufferings shall share also in My triumph. The greatness of the reward shall be in proportion to the patience and the struggle. 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne' (*Rev.* iii. 21).

III. The Enterprise to which He calls us

It is the greatest and noblest that can be imagined: to carry on His own work, sharing His labours and sufferings here, and His glory hereafter. It is:—

1. *To glorify the Father.* This is what was ever nearest to the heart of Jesus. 'I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do' (*S. John* xvii. 4). Now He calls me to glorify God by following in His footsteps, to bear witness to the truth in an evil world, to resist Satan, and help to cast him out of the world.

2. *To conquer myself.* To set up the kingdom of God in my own heart. To destroy within myself the empire of self-love, and the love of the world. To banish from my soul every other spirit but the Spirit of Jesus. To bring all my thoughts, my affections, my actions, into obedience to Him (2 *Cor.* x. 5). To die to self and to the world, that He alone may live and reign in me (*Gal.* ii. 20; vi. 14).

3. *To help to establish the kingdom of Christ in the world.* Not an earthly kingdom of an earthly Christ, such as the

world might acknowledge and applaud. Not a mere kingdom of philanthropy and social betterment, but a supernatural kingdom of grace and truth in the hearts of men; a kingdom of humility, poverty, meekness, purity, and love.

Think how the world needs this kingdom. Think of the reign of Satan in so many hearts, so many living in every kind of sin, 'having no hope, and without God in the world' (*Eph.* ii. 12). How can I see this and not accept the call of Jesus?

O Blessed Jesus, great Captain of our Salvation, fill my heart with Thine own zeal for the glory of God, Thine own burning love for souls. Set my heart free, that I may be able to bring others out of slavery to the world, the flesh, and the devil, into 'the glorious liberty of the children of God' (*Rom.* viii. 21).

IV. The Conditions of the Warfare

Listen to our Lord while He tells you what they are. 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me' (*S. Matt.* xvi. 24). If I accept His invitation I must be content to be as He was in the world. I must be ready to endure hardness; to suffer many temptations; to bear reproach, contempt, rejection. I must put aside much that is naturally pleasant and attractive; much that appeals to my ambition, my love of influence, popularity, comfort. I must be prepared to take up the cross in whatever form it may be laid upon me.

But while I thus count the cost, let me remember this:

1. Jesus, my Captain, asks me to endure nothing which He has not first endured Himself. In all toils, temptations, and sufferings, in death itself, He has gone before me. If He calls me to give up anything, He gave up all for me. He gave up the glory which He had in heaven, laid it aside to take our nature in its weakness, emptied Himself to take the form of a servant. As Man He surrendered His will in perfect obedience. He gave up riches, honour, reputation, the sweet joys of home, His Blessed Mother, and chose a life of poverty, reproach, suffering, and at last the death of the Cross.

2. Let me remember also that the service of Christ, though it seems to the worldly heart a heavy burden, is in reality full of sweetness. 'Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light' (*S. Matt.* xi. 29, 30).

That is what our Lord says of it. And do I not know from experience that it is true? Have I not always been happy and at peace when I have really taken Christ's yoke upon me and followed Him; when I have been faithful in all my duties; diligent in prayer; when I have denied myself, been unselfish, mortified, recollected?

On the other hand, when I have been self-indulgent, dissipated, idle, lukewarm, have I not always been restless and unhappy? Do I not know that there is neither true freedom, nor rest, nor joy, but in the service of my Lord?

3. Yes, the service of Christ, if it is sometimes hard to nature, has joys and consolations of its own: the joy our Lord sometimes gives me in Communion or in prayer; the joy which comes when I have done some unselfish act, or resisted some temptation, for love of Him; the joy of helping other souls. These are joys greater and more lasting than any that the world can give.

4. And lastly: the sacrifices, the toils, the sufferings, whatever they may be, are transitory; the rewards eternal. Eternal; yes, and surpassing!

Here is the testimony of one who knew well what toil and suffering are: 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us' (*Rom.* viii. 18). 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal' (2 *Cor.* iv. 17, 18).

So meditate upon the kingdom of Christ, and pray that you may not be deaf to His call, but prompt and diligent to obey.

Imitation of Christ, I. i; II. i; III. lvi.

THE ATONING SACRIFICE

PREL. i. S. Matthew xxvii. 33–37.

Prel. ii. Contemplate our Lord bearing our sins in His own body on the Cross. Behold His arms stretched out so wide, as if to embrace all within the reach of His love. 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me' (*S. John* xii. 32).

Prel. iii. Pray that the love of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, displayed in the Passion and Death of Jesus, may awaken in your heart a response of grateful love, which shall constrain you to give yourself wholly to Him.

I. THE SUFFERINGS OF OUR LORD

The sufferings which our Lord endured throughout His life, and especially in His Passion, were the inevitable consequences of a life of perfect obedience to God in this sinful world. If 'all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution' (2 *Tim.* iii. 12), how much more must that have been the case with the sinless Son of God! Sinful man cannot but rise up in antagonism against the All-holy God.

Consider, then, the sufferings of Jesus in His Passion.

1. *They were complete in their range and form.* (1) *In His body.* He suffered every kind of pain and indignity. He was bound, struck, spit upon, dragged hither and thither through the streets, from the High Priest's palace to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, and back again to Pilate; He was crowned with thorns, mocked, scourged, compelled to carry His Cross, though so weak and faint.

(2) *In His mind.* Sorrow of every kind, rejection by His own people, loneliness, betrayal, desertion, denial, hatred, contempt, the jeers and insults of the spectators, the natural shrinking from pain and death.

(3) *In His soul and spirit.* The weight of our sins (*Isa.* liii. 6); the horror of an inward darkness, the hiding of God's face. He, the spotless Lamb of God, 'made sin for us' (2 *Cor.* v. 21). In the garden and on the Cross He felt the loathsomeness of all our sins, and the separation from God which is the result of sin. 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' (*S. Mark* xv. 34). Separated from the Father He could never be; but now, in order that He might taste death in all its horror as the penal consequence of sin, He willed that His human soul should be

bereft of all sensible consolation in the felt presence of His Father.

2. *These sufferings were real; the sufferings of a true manhood.* His divine Personality did not make them to be unreal or unfelt; rather, because of the perfection and sensitiveness of His body and soul, He felt them far more than we with our coarser nature and duller sensibility could feel them.

3. *They were voluntary.* As the eternal Son He gladly accepted the work of our redemption which His Father gave Him to do, and as Man He voluntarily accepted all the sufferings by which that work must be accomplished. In none of them was He merely passive: all were actively offered to the Father as an expression of the loyalty owed by man to God. Thus He sanctified His humanity by the discipline of a life of suffering in obedience to God, in order that He might make it a principle of renewal and sanctification to our fallen world.

At any moment of His life on earth He could have asked to be discharged from this burden. In His Passion He could have asked for 'more than twelve legions of angels,' or by His own power have come down from the Cross (*S. Matt.* xxvi. 53; xxvii. 40); only in that case we should have been left unredeemed. So to manifest His Father's love He endured the Cross, and by His sacrifice of Himself He saved us from eternal loss.

II. Their Propitiatory Value

1. Apart from Christ I am 'sold under sin' (*Rom.* vii. 14). From this slavery I can find no release in myself. 'The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do' (*Rom.* vii. 19).

2. By sin I have incurred death, the penalty of separation from God, the death of my soul, which, if it is not remedied now, will pass on into 'the second death' (*Rev.* xx. 14), the eternal death of hell.

3. I cannot free myself from the dominion of sin. I cannot of myself make any atonement for my sin, nor can I unite myself to God, who is my true life and health.

4. But what I could not do for myself Christ has done for me. He came to deliver me by His death. In Gethsemane and upon the Cross He bore the burden of my sins, and there

paid the penalty for them. Without the sacrifice of His Death I must have paid that penalty myself: I must have been for ever separated from God, abiding under His wrath, i.e. His necessary hostility to sin.

5. How the Death of Christ has atoned for our sins, and reconciled us to God, Scripture does not explain; but it assures us of the fact. 'The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all' (*Isa.* liii. 6); not by an unjust demand that He should suffer for sins which were not His own, but by a mystery of divine condescension and love whereby He is identified with the whole mass of humanity and bears the consequences of our rebellion. Man could offer no acceptable sacrifice for his sins. The Father gave His only-begotten Son to do that on our behalf. 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son' (*S. John* iii. 16). 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 *S. John* iv. 10). That is enough for us. If we accept the fact with penitent faith, we shall come to know in experience its blessed truth, and its power to reconcile us to God.

III. Their Redeeming Power

The mystery of the Atonement does not end with the Death of our Lord. We must not separate Calvary from Pentecost and the Church, the Body of the risen and ascended Lord. By His obedience unto death our Lord obtained as His reward the glorification of His own humanity, and the power to send His Holy Spirit to unite us to Himself.

It is in this reunion with God in Christ by the gift of the Spirit that the full fruit of the Atonement is found.

Our Lord rose from the dead that His life might be the source of spiritual life in us. By this gift of new life we are united with God and all the faithful, no longer 'aliens and strangers,' but 'fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God' (*Eph.* ii. 12, 19).

By the Spirit we are incorporated into Christ, so that His acts become ours; for Christ and we are one (1 *Cor.* xii. 12, 27). In Him we have died to sin and are risen again in newness of life.

One part, indeed, of His atoning work, the propitiation He made for our sins, is all His own. We cannot share that. We can only accept it with penitent faith and thankful love, and plead it in our Eucharists and prayers. But in all the rest we must take our part.

As in life and in death He offered Himself a sacrifice to the praise and glory of God; so, united with Him, we can fulfil the purpose for which we were created, offering ourselves, our souls and bodies, a living sacrifice well-pleasing to God.

As He, the Captain of our salvation, was made perfect through suffering (*Heb.* ii. 10); so the same path towards perfection lies before us. 'If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him' (2 *Tim.* ii. 12). Suffering is indeed the consequence and penalty of sin, but the grace of Christ's Passion and Death has transformed it, so that now our sufferings, if accepted and borne in union with Him, are filled with the fragrance of His merits, and will be rewarded with glory (*Eph.* v. 2; *Rom.* viii. 17).

It will strengthen us to meet all sufferings whether of body, mind, or spirit, if we know that we can glorify God by bearing them in the power of that victorious grace which Christ our Lord won for us upon the Cross. The greatest sufferings lose their sting under the healing influence of loving self-sacrifice to God; and the smallest gain a dignity which elevates and sanctifies the whole life, if they are accepted with a view to the divine glory.

Thus the imitation of Christ in His perfect obedience through all sufferings even unto death, will gradually sanctify us in body, soul, and spirit, by the grace which enables us to suffer in union with Him.

All this fruit of the Atonement and Redemption may as yet be very imperfect in us, but if we are abiding in Christ and learning the lessons He will teach us, the work is going on; and meanwhile God looks upon us not merely as we are at present, but as He sees that we are becoming and shall ultimately be, and so we are 'accepted in the Beloved' (*Eph.* i. 6).

Imitation of Christ, II. xi, xii; IV. viii, ix.

THE LIFE OF UNION WITH GOD IN CHRIST

PREL. i. Contemplate our Lord saying to His disciples, 'If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him' (*S. John* xiv. 23).

Prel. ii. Pray that, by the help of the Holy Spirit, you may enter more and more fully into the meaning and blessedness of this promise.

A life of union with God: this is the goal of all our longings and aspirations. Let us meditate upon it at the end of our retreat. Consider:—

I. ITS DIVINE ORIGIN

Think of it first mystically, i.e. as depending on a divine act, as a part of the mystery of the Incarnation.

We are 'accepted in the Beloved' (*Eph.* i. 6). There has been an act of divine love and power towards man in the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. When we were 'dead in trespasses and sins' (*Eph.* ii. 1) God manifested His love, and wisdom, and power, towards us. He 'quickened' us. He gathered us into union with Himself in Christ. We could not unite ourselves to God. He must do that for us. In Christ we who 'were far off' have been 'made nigh' (*Eph.* ii. 13).

We have not, then, to bring ourselves nigh, or ourselves to create this union which is our true life. God has done this for us, and done it, as S. Paul reminds us, from all eternity. 'He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise and glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved' (*Eph.* i. 4–6).

And this eternal choice has been sealed to us individually in time, in our baptism and confirmation, in our call to the priesthood [or to religion]. God's love, and choice, and purpose, have been beforehand with us from the beginning.

This is a comforting thought. The life of union with God in Christ depends, in the first place, upon His own act. He has from the first predestinated us to be gathered into union with Himself in Christ. He has made us His children by adoption and grace, and no one (man or devil) shall pluck us out of His hand (*S. John* x. 28).

II. Its Moral Requirements

Secondly, let us consider this union morally, i.e. as depending also on our co-operation, the cleaving of our will, our inmost personality, to our Lord. Having been grafted into Christ, the True Vine, we are to abide in Him, and to let Him abide in us (*S. John* xv. 4).

How are we to do this amid the pressure and cares of our work, and the manifold distractions of our life?

1. First and chiefly, *by perseverance in the sacramental life.* That divine act by which God has united us to Himself in Christ by Baptism is to find its development and perfecting in our Communions. But though as infants we were wholly passive while we received the gift of Baptism, it cannot be so now with our Communions. In every Communion we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, but the benefits (the virtue of the Sacrament) depend on our spiritual response. We are not only to take and eat, but also to feed upon Christ in our hearts by faith, i.e. by the activity and response of our spiritual nature, the surrender of ourselves to Him whom we receive. This calls for effort and watchfulness on our part. Are we preparing for our Communions as we ought? and cherishing the gift after we have received it?

2. *By our regular practice of prayer*, especially our mental prayer. It is in mental prayer chiefly that we feed upon the grace of our Communions, and grow increasingly into union with God.

As we persevere in mental prayer we ought to find that we have less and less need of considerations, and our prayer becomes mainly an exercise of the affections and of petitions; or in times of dryness an exercise of the will in acts of resignation and other virtues, even when we have no warm feelings in making them. And from this we may be led on

to a kind of prayer which is still more simple and quiet, called the prayer of simplicity or the prayer of simple faith, a prayer which is approaching contemplation, that state in which the soul lives habitually in the presence of God, not by any effort of the imagination, but by love and the union of our will with the will of God.

3. *By study of Holy Scripture and devotional reading.* This will enrich our knowledge of God, and our prayer. Without it prayer tends to become abstract, and our knowledge of God a knowledge about Him, rather than a personal knowledge of Himself. If we feed upon the Divine life in our Communions and in our mental prayer, we do so in another way in our reading of Holy Scripture. Our devotional reading may be, as it were, an extended act of spiritual communion, in which our sacramental Communions continue to blossom and bear fruit.

4. *By the practice of the presence of God*, that habit of looking up to Him, which will increase with the use of ejaculatory prayer. All our acts, if done with a reverent homage to God's presence, become acts of religion. The varied features of earthly life, however busy, ought not to hinder our devotion to God, but rather to afford occasions for lifting up our minds and hearts to Him.

With regard to all these practices, remember that it is mainly a matter of will and the grace of God, not of feeling. So we need not wait till devout feelings make them easy, but recognizing their importance we shall begin to do them, relying upon God to help us, and in the effort of faith we shall find that He gives us day by day the power we need.

III. Its Sure Hope

Let us end by returning to the point from which we set out, viz. God's part in this life of union with Himself, and thinking how surely we may trust Him who began it by an act of His own, to continue it to the end.

When middle life is passed and we are growing old there is often a time of special trial. Our first fervours are long past, our natural powers are failing, there is a sense of dullness, perhaps of sadness and failure. We must not give way to this, and sink down into a life of mere routine. No, let us be sure that if we are still wanting to

give ourselves to God, that is because we are really being carried on by Him.

Ponder these words from the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'Let us go on unto perfection' (vi. 1). The real meaning of the Greek word (φερώμεθα) is, 'Let us be borne on,' like those who are carried along in a ship. The thought is not primarily of our effort, but of our being borne along. Is not this a thought to help us when we feel discouraged and depressed? Will it not help us then to rest in the thought of Another, a Power not ourselves, the Power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, carrying us onward towards the end? Of course we must do our part, but that part is very largely the yielding of ourselves to a mightier Power working in us, a personal Power able to lift us out of our morbid tempers of despondency and self-pity, and to carry us onward to the end.

The Christian should have no room for sadness and despondency because of growing old and failing powers. Indeed for the soul that lives in God there is no growing old. It is not years that make souls old, but selfishness and sin. The soul that seeks God in Christ finds in Him an inexhaustible spring of life, because through the Spirit it finds love continually renewed. To such a one the best of life is not behind but before:

> Grow old along with me!
> The best is yet to be,
> The last of life for which the first was made:
> Our times are in His hand
> Who said 'a whole I planned,
> Youth shows but half; trust God: see all
> Nor be afraid!'

Let us try to have something of this robust optimism of the poet. If only we are seeking to abide in Christ, yielding ourselves to that great act by which He has taken us into Himself, and is still bearing us on by His Spirit, then for us there shall be no failure. God will perfect the work He has begun in us. He will make us fit for that place and work in the perfect whole, for which He foreordained us and chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be 'to the praise and glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.'

Imitation of Christ, III. xxi, xxxiv.

CHRIST MANIFESTED IN GLORY

PREL. i. ' When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory ' (*Col.* iii. 4).

Prel. ii. S. Paul in prayer contemplating this glory of which he writes.

Prel. iii. Pray that the eyes of your heart may be opened to contemplate it as he did.

I. CHRIST IN GLORY

Raise your thoughts to heaven. There, amid the inaccessible Light, in the highest place, is the throne of God, the dwelling-place of the ever-blessed Trinity. Think of it as S. John saw it in his vision, ' Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne ; and He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone ; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald ' (*Rev.* iv. 2, 3). There, in the midst of the dazzling splendour of this glory, dwells with the Father the sacred Humanity of Christ our Lord.

There, ' hid with God,' hid by the very splendour of the light, is that sacred Body which was taken of Mary's substance, which endured so many sufferings and humiliations, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, weariness and pain, shame and spitting, the scourge, the nails, the soldier's lance piercing His side in death : there too is His human Soul which knew sorrow and grief beyond what we can measure—there raised to this exceeding glory is the sacred Humanity of Jesus, safe for evermore from all that man or devil can do against Him. No more can He suffer weariness or pain, nor have insults heaped upon Him. Wicked men may still hate and blaspheme Him, but they cannot touch Him now.

1. *Lift up your heart and rejoice* in the joy and glory of the sacred Humanity on the throne of God.

2. *Marvel with exceeding wonder at Its elevation.* Is it possible that the flesh, once so humiliated, once so weak and suffering, should now be so exalted? That He who was

crucified in weakness, should now reign in such glory and power? O wonderful transformation!

3. *Rejoice in Its exaltation.* Rejoice with our Lord. Tell Him that it is a joy to you to know that He is thus exalted, safe for ever from all suffering. Rejoice with Him in His own exceeding joy. He means that we should feel His joy in ourselves, that His joy should be our strength, that it should thrill through the whole body of His elect, in heaven and on earth. As His members we ought to experience the invigorating power of this joy. Even in suffering and sorrow, still we may, and ought to, experience it. As He, while on earth, was yet always in heaven, in the bosom of the Father (*S. John* iii. 13); so we, His members, though still on earth, have been made to 'sit together with Him in heavenly places' (*Eph.* ii. 6). We have a twofold life, the life of earth and the life of heaven. We sustain, in measure, the twofold character of *Viator* and *Comprehensor*. While still travellers in this vale of misery, we enshrine in our hearts Him who makes the very joy of heaven.

II. The Future Manifestation

This glory is hidden from us now. We can only contemplate it by faith. But one day it is to be manifested. Look forward to that great day, the day of the coming of the Lord. This was the hope and strength of the first Christians. It should be ours also. Say not, 'The hope has died out through long delay'; say rather, 'How near it may be now!'

1. '*When Christ shall be manifested.*' That is what we should be looking for. Year by year His approach draws nearer. Even now He may be 'at the doors' (*S. Matt.* xxiv. 33). 'Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me' (*Rev.* xxii. 12). He has bid us watch, and pray continually, 'Thy kingdom come.' How can our hearts cling to this world, how can we live for these transitory things, when we know that Christ may soon be here? Yes, it is the expectation of His coming, the looking for His appearing, which must keep our hearts pure and detached from the world. Pray Him to purify your heart, and to

hasten the day of His appearing. His last words spoken from heaven to S. John are a promise of His speedy coming, 'Surely I come quickly.' Let me so live that I may be able to say with the holy Apostle, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus' (*Rev.* xxii. 20).

2. *Behold yourself with Him at His coming.* Hear Him calling your body out of the grave, quickening it with His own immortal life, fashioning it like unto His own glorious Body (*Phil.* iii. 21), impassible, subtle, spiritual, radiant in glory—a body no longer subject to weariness, pain, decay. Or think how, if you should be alive at His coming, you may be amongst those blessed ones who shall be 'changed' without passing through death, 'caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air,' and so to be ever with Him (1 *Cor.* xv. 51; 1 *Thess.* iv. 17).

3. *Behold the whole company of heaven,* martyrs, confessors, doctors, virgins, those whom you have read of and learned to love. You will see them all. Your friends too, those from whom you felt the parting so keenly, you will meet them again, and there will be no more parting. Think of yourself in that great multitude of the elect. Oh, the joy and the wonder to find oneself there, in that blessed company of all the saints!

4. *Think of eternity.* To be 'for ever with the Lord.' The joy of heaven is not a joy which, like the joys of earth, will pass away and leave us empty and unsatisfied. It is a joy endless, unwearying, the eternal joy of God. What shall I think then of all the fleeting joys of earth? What of all my sufferings past and gone for ever? Shall I have any regrets? Shall I think it was too hard to bear the cross, to be crucified to the world? Shall I not rather be thankful for every cross I was called to bear, every sacrifice I was enabled by grace to make?

5. *And then, to crown all, the vision of Christ our Lord.* 'We shall see Him.' Oh, who can tell the beauty and the glory of His manifestation in that day, the wonder and the joy of that open vision! The light of His countenance seen, not as now dimly with the eye of faith, though that is unspeakably blessed, but in the realized splendour of an

open vision. 'We shall see Him as He is,' His Godhead no less than His Manhood. Nor will the presence and the glory of His people be less a delight to Him. 'When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believe' (*2 Thess.* i. 10). The glorified saints will reflect the very image and glory of the Lord. 'We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is,' and in that vision be ourselves transformed (*1 S. John* iii. 2).

This is the hope set before us. This is to be the inspiration and the joy of our present life and work. We are to hear at all times in our hearts the voice of our coming King, 'Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every man according as his work shall be' (*Rev.* xxii. 12).

Seeing, then, that we look for such things, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? How careful that we may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless at His coming! (*2 S. Pet.* iii. 11, 14).

Imitation of Christ, III. xlviii, xlix.

APPENDIX II

INSTRUCTIONS

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I. HOW TO USE THE MEDITATIONS

MEDITATION or mental prayer is essentially a spiritual exercise ; that is to say, in meditation we do not use merely the natural powers of the mind, but we bring those powers to God to be quickened and illuminated by His Holy Spirit. Hence we must come to our meditation with humility, expectation, and self-surrender ; humility, because our own powers are altogether insufficient, and are also marred and weakened by sin ; expectation, because we confidently look for God to reveal Himself to us in answer to our desire to know and love Him ; trustful self-surrender, because we are coming to One who is our Creator, our Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, the Author and Giver of all good gifts, who wants to do us all possible good, and is able to supply all our needs.

Before beginning the meditation, read over the printed outline, or, if the meditation has been given *viva voce*, read over your notes of it. Stand [1] for a moment at the place where you are about to make your meditation, and realize that you are going to present yourself before God, to speak with Him and He with you.

Then kneel and say slowly, 'In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.' After this, make the three following acts, quite briefly and in your own words, in some such way as this :—

1. An act of faith in the presence of God, and adoration of His majesty ; e.g. 'My God, I believe that Thou art present with me, yea within me, and knowest all my needs. Out of the depth of my nothingness I adore Thee, my God and all my good.'

2. An act of humility and contrition ; e.g. 'My God, I confess that I am not worthy to come before Thee, by reason of my many sins and numberless negligences. Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.'

[1] i.e. if you are alone.

3. An act of self-oblation, with prayer for light and grace to make your meditation to the glory of God and the benefit of your soul; e.g. 'My God, I offer myself to Thee in my meditation and prayer, to spend this time as Thou willest and knowest to be best for me. Help me to put away all vain, evil, and wandering thoughts; enlighten my understanding; kindle my affections; teach me to pray, and may Thy Holy Spirit pray within me.'

Then say the *Veni Creator*, or some other prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Having thus entered upon your meditation, take the points one by one. Keep to the subject before you. Do not allow yourself to think that you have no need of it, or that some other would be more helpful. This is what God has provided for you. Apply your mind to comprehend and penetrate each truth rather than to develop the points at length. It is not the amount of knowledge nor a variety of striking or original thoughts which satisfies the soul and kindles spiritual desires, but 'to feel and taste the truths interiorly.'[1] Therefore if one point, or even a single sentence, strikes you and awakens devout affections, pause upon it, let it sink in, and make acts arising out of it, till both mind and heart are fully satisfied.[2] Do not be in a hurry to pass on. Allow your soul to remain under the impression of the truth till it is prostrate in repentance, or established in indifference, or resigned to sacrifice, or warmed with generous love and resolution. The great object of meditation is to be penetrated with the truth so as to love it and act upon it. The exercise of the understanding is of little use unless it kindles the affections and moves the will. Meditation is not concerned with mere abstract truth. We meditate in order to come to the Personal Truth, that is to God; and it is only while we love that we can come to Him. 'He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love' (1 S. *John* iv. 8).

At the same time we must make our meditation practical by applying the various points to ourselves. What does this truth teach me about God? About myself? What have I done about it hitherto? What ought I to do now?

[1] S. Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises*, Annot. II.
[2] op. cit. Addition IV.

What would our Lord have done? What shall I wish that I had done when I come to die? What would be my advice to another in the same circumstances as myself?

These and such like reflections will lead not only to acts of the affections, but also to petitions and resolutions. Petitions are a very important part of meditation. It is not enough to have good affections, or even to know what we ought to do and to wish and resolve to do it; we must also ask for grace to be faithful to the inspirations of God. Pray, then, for this grace; and pray also for any other graces and virtues you feel your need of, or which the Holy Spirit inspires you to ask for.

In retreat whatever resolutions you may be led to make during each meditation should lead up to, and at last be gathered into, one or two final ones bearing upon the object for which the retreat is made, whether it be the determination of vocation, the reformation or renewal of spiritual life, preparation for some work to be undertaken, or for any other purpose. Do not be in a hurry to make these final resolutions. Look to God to show you what they should be. The earlier exercises of the retreat are intended to prepare your soul, through penitence and detachment, to receive light from God and to follow His call when made known.

In ending each meditation, (1) ask pardon for any faults or negligences of which you may have been guilty while making it; (2) thank God for the help He has given you; (3) pray for grace to bring to good effect the good desires and purposes He has put into your mind. Conclude with an Our Father, *Anima Christi*, or some other suitable prayer.

One hour should, if possible, be given to each meditation.

As to posture: you may meditate either kneeling, sitting, or standing, or at times prostrate on the ground, as may best help you to gain the fruit you seek. But it is well to remember S. Ignatius' counsel, 'If kneeling I find that which I desire, I will not change to another position,'[1] and in any case we should begin and end on our knees.

If God gives you light and consolation see that you derive from it all the fruit of amendment of life and spiritual

[1] op. cit. Addition IV.

progress God intends you to gain from it. Beware of vain complacency: seek rather to deepen humility. Remember the words of à Kempis: 'When spiritual consolation is given thee from God, receive it thankfully; but understand that it is the gift of God, not thy desert. Be not puffed up, be not too joyful, nor vainly presumptuous; but rather be the more humble for that gift, more wary too and fearful in all thine actions; for that hour will pass away, and temptation will follow.'[1]

On the other hand, if you should find yourself in spiritual darkness and desolation, or beset with distractions and temptations, do not on that account give up or shorten your meditation. S. Ignatius advises that in such cases we should even prolong the time for a short space, so as to overcome the enemy.[2] Try quietly to recall your attention, and say some few words of prayer from time to time to obtain the grace you desire; humble yourself before God, and patiently endure. Do not be discouraged. If you have done your best your meditation will not be fruitless. You may not feel it at the time, but God, you may be sure, has been secretly supporting you with His grace, and you will find afterwards that you have received blessing and strength. You may not have obtained the precise fruit you had hoped for in your meditation, but God will have given you something else, which He sees you need more. To rise from our meditation with nothing but a deepened sense of our poverty and helplessness, our manifold evils, and our great need of grace, may sometimes be of more real profit than many lights and consolations.

[1] *De Imit. Christi*, II. ix. 4. [2] *Spiritual Exercises*, Annot. XIII.

II. EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

If a priest is to grow in holiness and strive, as he is bound to do, after perfection, daily self-examination is a necessity. Without it he will have a very superficial knowledge of himself. He will see only his principal faults, and these vaguely, without discovering their roots or realizing their effects ; neither will he have due contrition for them, nor take efficacious means to correct them. Thus evil habits will grow upon him unawares, and in proportion as they become inveterate they will darken and blunt his conscience. Others will see his faults and sinful habits, but he himself will be blind to them. His soul will become like the field of a slothful farmer, overrun with weeds and thorns. How can such an one acquire the sanctity which his vocation demands ? How can he recognize and respond to grace, or fulfil the duties of his state ? Daily self-examination is necessary for all, but above all for priests.

S. Ignatius teaches us two kinds of examination : the particular and the general.

I. The Particular Examination, to be made Daily

The principal purpose of this examination is the rooting out of some particular sin or defect. ' It includes three times, and an examination of oneself to be made twice.

' The first time is the morning. Immediately on rising the man ought to resolve to guard himself carefully against that particular sin or defect which he desires to correct and amend.

' The second time is after [in our circumstances it would be better to say ' before '] the midday meal, when he ought to ask of God our Lord that which he desires, viz. grace to remember how often he has fallen into that particular sin or defect, and to amend in future ; after which let him make the first examination, demanding an account from his soul concerning the particular matter which he desires to correct

or amend, reviewing the time elapsed, hour by hour, or period by period, beginning from the time he rose till the moment of the present examination; and let him mark on paper the number of times he has fallen into that particular sin or defect; and afterwards let him resolve anew to amend himself until the second examination that he will make.

'The third time is after supper [or at his night prayers], when the second examination will be made in the same way, going through the interval hour by hour from the first examination to the present one, and marking again the number of times he has fallen.'[1]

The matter of our particular examination may be any sin or defect either of commission or omission, especially that which is our besetting sin, and the root and cause of many other sins. In the case of those who are more advanced, it may be some virtue which they are seeking to acquire by making a certain number of acts of it, either externally or internally, and practising it as often as the opportunity offers. It any case the matter which we fix upon should be something clear and definite, so that when we make our examination there may be no doubt whether we have kept our resolution or not.

During retreat S. Ignatius would have us take for the matter of our particular examination the way in which we keep the rules of the retreat and perform its exercises, especially our meditations.

He adds also four directions, 'in order more quickly to eradicate the said sin or defect':

1. 'Every time a person falls into that particular sin or defect, he should lay his hand on his breast, grieving that he has fallen: a thing he can do even in the presence of many people without their perceiving it.'

2. The other three directions are concerned with marking the number of our failures, and comparing them day by day and week by week, so as to see what progress we are making.

This method, however, of strictly marking the number of our faults may not be advisable for all. Gagliardi, one

[1] Slightly abridged.

of the earliest and most authoritative commentators on the Exercises, says ' it is useless and harmful to the scrupulous.'

II. General Examination of Conscience in order to purify oneself and to confess better

The method of making this examination contains five points.

' The first point is to give thanks to our Lord God for the benefits we have received.

' The second, to ask grace to know our sins and to root them out.

' The third, to demand of the soul an account, hour by hour, or period by period, from the time of rising down to the present examination, first of thoughts, then of words, lastly of actions.

' The fourth, to ask pardon of the Lord God for the faults.

' The fifth, to purpose amendment with His grace.'

This examination ought to be made every night. In addition to examining our thoughts, words, actions, and omissions, it will be well to think also of our special duties as priests and how we have fulfilled them.[1]

The purpose of beginning with thanksgiving is to deepen our contrition by realizing our ingratitude to God who is so good to us. And if we refer our act of contrition and purpose of amendment to our next confession, it will help to secure us against the danger, incident to the practice of frequent confession, of making our confessions without that contrition and purpose of amendment which are essential parts of the sacrament.

In our examination at night the particular and the general examinations may be combined. After making the act of thanksgiving and the prayer for grace, we should first examine ourselves as to the matter of our particular examination, and then as to the other sins and defects of the day. Finally, we should make our act of contrition, and pray for pardon and grace to amend.

[1] This method may also be used when preparing for our ordinary confessions.

In retreat our confession should be something more than at other times. Our examination should go deeper, extending to the roots of our sins and defects, and our confession should be made with special care as to contrition and purpose of amendment. Generally it is advisable that it should extend over the whole period since our last retreat. At times it may be good, or even necessary, to make a general examination and confession of our whole life.

S. Ignatius says that the retreat confession will be best made immediately after the Exercises of the First Week, for then the retreatant will be likely to make it with better dispositions and greater profit. If, however, as may sometimes happen, his conscience urges him to make it earlier, it is best that the director should allow him to do so, in order that his mind may be more free to apply itself to the meditations. But in such cases it will often be well to defer absolution till the end of the meditations belonging to the purgative way, when the penitent will perhaps desire to add something further to his confession, and will at all events have had his contrition deepened, and his purpose of amendment strengthened by the meditations he has made, and so be better disposed to receive the grace of the sacrament.

III. HEADS FOR EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE IN TIME OF RETREAT

I. Relatively to God

1. Sins? Offences? Negligences?

2. Faith? Hope? Charity? Holy Fear?

3. Generosity? Perseverance in spiritual dryness, etc.?

4. Exercise of the presence of God by the practice of ejaculatory prayer?

5. Holy Mass? The Divine Office?

II. Relatively to Others

1. To my superiors.

Due and canonical obedience? Respect—interior? exterior, in word and conduct?

2. To my brethren in the priesthood, especially my colleagues.

(*a*) Mutual support? Union? Charity? Forbearance? Zeal for their spiritual advancement? The common good?

(*b*) Harsh judgements or words? Envy? Detraction? Fault-finding? Aversions?

3. To my inferiors.

Pupils? penitents? servants? etc.

(*a*) Vigilance? Discretion? Prudence? Gentleness and firmness? Patience? Zeal for their good?

(*b*) Good example? Intercession? Seeking help from God?

4. To my parishioners.

The sick? The whole? Penitents? The children? The poor? Administration of Sacraments? Preaching? Catechizing?

5. To all others amongst whom I live, or whom I meet.

(*a*) Am I charitable or severe in my judgements? Contempt? Detraction? Slander? Mischief-making? Gossip?

(*b*) Zeal? Discretion? Prudence? Given edification in visits, journeys, holidays, etc.?

(*c*) Intercession.

III. Relatively to Myself

1. Esteem and love of my vocation?

2. Desire of attaining perfection, renewed every day on rising?

3. Humility? Self-sacrifice? Unselfishness?

4. Mortification? Temperance in eating, drinking, and smoking? Due regulation of amusements, light reading, social visits, expenditure?

5. Study, especially of Holy Scripture? Spiritual reading?

IV. Concerning Spiritual Progress

1. Purity of conscience?

2. Facility in resisting temptations? My besetting sin?

3. Progress in virtues: Humility? Charity? Patience? Regularity?

4. Spiritual exercises. Mental Prayer? Recollection? Union with God?

5. Am I a fervent or a lukewarm priest?

V. Confession

There are two kinds of confessions, confessions of necessity and confessions of devotion. To those who have mortal sin upon their conscience confession is of necessity, whenever it is possible to make it; to others it is of devotion. But all who are in earnest about advancing in holiness will make their confessions regularly and frequently, even though they have only venial sins and imperfections to confess. The Sacrament of Penance is a fountain of grace to all, even to the holiest. It is a means of more thorough self-knowledge, and sustains the habit of self-examination.

It renews and deepens our repentance, often changing and elevating attrition[1] into contrition. It confirms our absolutions and our peace with God. It infuses a fresh sacramental grace into the soul every time we receive it. It deepens humility and is a help to perseverance. All these benefits are obtained by those who come frequently to this sacrament, though they may have only venial sins to confess, or even nothing but a renewed accusation of sins long ago confessed and forgiven.

But to secure these fruits we must be careful about our preparation for the sacrament, taking care that we do not approach it as a mere matter of routine.

To make a good preparation four things are necessary:

1. *Ask the help of the Holy Spirit.* 'Lord, show me my sins, and make me truly sorry for them.' We need this help of the Holy Spirit, because the devil and our own pride will often hide our sins from us, or make us unwilling to face them.

2. *Examination of conscience.* For an ordinary confession, if made frequently, not much time will be needed for examination. A quarter of an hour ought generally to be sufficient. But it must be made with due care and an honest desire to purify the conscience and advance in the way of holiness. To avoid needless anxiety, remember (1) that only mortal sins are necessary matter of confession; yet (2) if we are in earnest about advancing in holiness, we shall be anxious to confess all we can remember as being in any way amiss, especially those sins and failures which we feel are most hindering our progress at the present time; (3) forgotten sins are forgiven along with those we confess; if, however, they are of a grave character they should, when remembered, be mentioned at our next confession.

It is good to seek out and to note the roots of our sins. This helps us to know ourselves; and often it is a good exercise of humility to confess the motive which led to the sin, for it is sometimes a greater humiliation to confess a bad motive, or some little detail, than the actual sin.

[1] i.e. imperfect sorrow arising from some supernatural motive short of the love of God, e.g. the fear of purgatory or of hell. This suffices for receiving Absolution, provided it includes a firm purpose of amendment.

3. *Act of contrition.* This is the most important part of our preparation, and perhaps the one most often neglected. It is the most important because a good act of contrition can avail for forgiveness without confession when this latter cannot be made, while confession without contrition, or at least without attrition, would be unavailing. We may stir up contrition by a brief meditation on the goodness of God whom we have grieved and offended, the sufferings of Christ, or the punishments due to sin. Sometimes also it may help us if we think what we might have been after all the graces bestowed upon us, and what in fact we are.

We must not be distressed if we have not the feeling of sorrow. The essence of contrition is not an emotion, but an attitude of the reason and the will. Do I want to love God? Am I resolved with His help not to sin again? That is contrition whatever may be the state of my feelings.

4. *A firm purpose of amendment.* This is really a necessary part of contrition, but because of its importance we may think of it separately. We should look back to what have been the occasions and causes of our sins, and then make a definite and strong resolution to avoid them for the future. We must also look forward and determine the means we must take in order to do this. Thus we shall direct both our contrition and our purpose of amendment to definite sins and failures. Lastly, we must pray for grace to keep our resolution.

We must not be discouraged or give up trying if we find that we have to confess very much the same sins time after time. However often or badly we may fail, we must return to God at once with as good an act of contrition as we can make, resolving, in the case of any mortal sin, to go to confession as soon as possible. Then let us renew our purpose of not sinning again, humbling and distrusting ourself, but never losing our trust and confidence in the mercy and goodness of God.

In retreat it is generally good to make a review of our life since our last retreat, and to confess at least the chief sins committed since then.

IV. THE DIVINE OFFICE

The Prayer Book Office consisting of Matins and Evensong is for us of the English Church the Divine Office. It is the form in which the Divine Office has come down to us, and in which the Church imposes it upon us as a solemn obligation. Only some real hindrance such as 'sickness or some other urgent cause'[1] can excuse its omission. No doubt it has suffered considerable loss in the way of variety and richness, in Antiphons, Responds, Commemorations, and Lections from the Fathers. Still it ought to be remembered that there has been a real counterbalancing gain in the restoration of the complete recitation of the Psalter and the full and continuous reading of Holy Scripture.

Let us not depreciate our own Office. If we supplement it by the addition of the Little Hours, which are scarcely, and some of them not at all, represented in the Prayer Book, we shall have an Office which will very fairly take the place of the Breviary of the seventh and eighth centuries, when it was, as liturgical experts acknowledge, at its best.

I. The Spirit in which the Office should be said

To say the Office as it ought to be said we must bring to it all the spiritual energies we possess, and a constant endeavour to say it better. There must be the gathering up of every faculty of our nature: our attention, to be true to the words; our lips, to give them reverent utterance; our understanding, to follow, as far as possible, their meaning; our affections, to bear our words and our thoughts up to God in the power of the Holy Ghost; our bodily posture, to secure reverence and devotion. Thus must we be careful to say our Office 'worthily, attentively, and devoutly.' We must take care that however much imperfection mars our Office by reason of the frailty of our nature, yet there is no slovenliness by defect of our will.

[1] *Book of Common Prayer*. Concerning the Services of the Church.

Then we must say our Office in union with Christ. We cannot rise up to God except in fellowship with our Lord. It is only by His mediation that we can take part in any truly spiritual and supernatural work. So we must say our Office as a real act of union with Christ. We must not think of Him as merely associating Himself with us, and helping us in our weakness to perform those acts of devotion which belong to our Office, but our devotion is to spring out of His. It is to have its root and sap and vitality in Him. He does not perfect our thoughts and affections, but we, in our imperfection, give expression to His thoughts and affections. We must therefore go deep down below ourselves into 'the mind of Christ,' in order that He may carry us along with Himself into the presence of the Father.

If we try to say our Office thus, in union with Christ, we may hope to find in it refreshment and joy. As His members we speak through Him, our Head, to the Father, and therefore we speak in the power of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of joy, whose office it is to bind the Father and the Son together in love. This is no mere metaphor or empty phrase, but as truly as we speak with our lips we speak with the utterance of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnate Word of God. If we did but realize this, how we should come to value the solemnity, and experience the joy, of the Divine Office! Let us think how the saying of our Office is a thing which could not be done for many thousands of years of the world's history. Although the same words were said in the Jewish Temple, yet they were said outside the sanctuary of the Divine Life. They were weak through the flesh, the letter only without the Spirit. All the worship of the ancient Temple was only typical of our worship in the Christian Church; for our worship springs out of our union with Christ. It is, so to speak, the flowering of our Eucharists. Our Communions are a planting of the root of the Divine Life within us, and that root should rise up and blossom in our daily Office, especially in the Psalter, the Anthology of Christ.

Let us therefore call up by an act of faith this Divine Life which is in us, and say our Office as the true and proper exercise of this Life. We speak to God, we praise Him, we supplicate His mercy, as the members of His dear Son.

The angels also praise God, but our praises should be dearer to God than theirs, for in all our praises and prayers there is a substantial presence and utterance of Christ, which is wanting to theirs. So let us learn to say our Office as an exercise of the grace of Christ, in union with Him, and in the power of the Holy Ghost.

II. Some Practical Directions

1. Choose a suitable time and place. Whether you say the Office alone or with others, the church is the place most favourable to recollection and devotion. If the church is not available, then it would be well, if possible, to have some place in the house set apart as an oratory.

2. As for the time—Matins should be said if possible before Mass, and the Little Hours as nearly as may be to the canonical hours. Beware of putting off Evensong or any part of the day's Office till late at night, when you will very likely be too weary to say it with attention and devotion.

3. The Office may be said kneeling, standing, or sitting. If sitting, be careful to assume a becoming posture. It is not well to say it in the street or other places liable to distractions, without real necessity.

4. The recitation of the Divine Office is a vocal prayer. It is necessary therefore that even when we say it in private the words should be pronounced audibly, or at least formed silently with the lips. A slight pause should be made at the colon in each verse. These two rules will prevent undue hurry in the recitation.

5. Before beginning dismiss all other thoughts, and say with attention the usual prayer, '*Aperi Domine.*'

Open, O Lord, my mouth to bless Thy holy Name, cleanse also my heart from all vain, evil, and wandering thoughts; enlighten my understanding, kindle my affections, that worthily, attentively, and devoutly I may say this Office, and so may be meet to be heard before the presence of Thy divine Majesty; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Office should be recited with attention and devotion. There are three kinds of attention, (1) attention to the words, (2) attention to their meaning, (3) attention to God.[1] The first will enable us to say the words correctly and completely. This, if accompanied with the general intention of praying and glorifying God, may suffice to discharge our obligation. But the priest who is content with this will be in danger of failing in that reverence and devotion which alone can make his service acceptable to God, and profitable for his own sanctification and that of the Church, on whose behalf he is set apart for this duty. The second, endeavours to follow the meaning of the words, so far as we can understand them. The third, consists in an elevation of the heart to God with appropriate thoughts and affections while we recite the words.

'One Hour said with devotion implies at the bottom of the heart a thousand good desires, a thousand pious affections.'[2]

6. If to Matins and Evensong we add the Little Hours we shall have seven Offices in all, and in that case it will be helpful to say each one of them with some special intention, e.g. :

(1) Connecting each of them with one of the Hours of the Passion.

(2) In honour of the seven blood-sheddings of our Lord, asking through each for some particular grace.

(3) For an increase of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost ; or of the three theological and the four cardinal virtues.

(4) For victory over the seven capital sins, or for grace to practise the opposite virtues.

(5) For various intercessory objects.

[1] S. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* ii. 2, q. 83, art. 13.
[2] S. Alphonsus.

V. THE PSALTER

The principal element in the Divine Office is the Psalter. Other portions of the Bible are read in the Office once, or at most twice, in the year; but the Psalter is said in its completeness every month, and indeed in far the larger part of the Church every week.

It is to be feared, however, that for many, even among the clergy, the Psalms are nothing more than the ancient poetry of the Jewish Church, the thoughts and words of their several authors, moved indeed by religious impulses, but only so far prophetic that in using them as Christian devotions we can accommodate them to a purpose for which they were not originally intended.

Very different is the estimate of these sacred songs which the Church from the beginning has formed and held. In her belief the Holy Ghost is the primary Author of them; and their deepest meaning is not the personal sentiments of their several human writers, called out by the experience of their own lives and times, but something infinitely greater, the experience and devotions of One who was to come, the Incarnate Son of God. It is the thoughts and affections which inspired His human soul, and with which He desires to inspire us, the members of His Body, that are the real substance and truest meaning of the Psalter.

The Psalter, therefore, ought to be regarded primarily as the utterance of the Incarnate Word, in which we, His members, have to take our part. The Holy Ghost, who inspired David and the other Psalmists, did not limit His meaning and the scope of His vision to them and their transitory circumstances, but projected, as it were, upon the background of their experience the thoughts and aspirations which He alone could truly utter who by His Incarnation gathered all humanity into Himself, and in whom our nature finds the true expression of its relation to God. 'The Holy Ghost,' says M. Olier, 'who knew from all eternity the praises that Jesus Christ rendered to the Father and would render to Him when He came into the world, began

by infusing them in advance into the soul of David, the father of Jesus Christ according to the flesh, and the figure of Him according to the Spirit' ; and the same may be said of those others who from time to time added their compositions to the Psalms of David.

> Thoughts beyond their thought
> To those high Bards were given. [1]

This is the explanation of what the Fathers constantly teach, that the Psalms are full of Christ ; that they are His voice, His language, His prayers ; the voice therefore of all the members of His Body in union with their Head ; a single yet a manifold voice, in which are mingled and expressed all the blessings of heaven and earth, all the desires and breathings of the Spirit, all the accents of man's sorrow for sin, of his praise and gratitude, of supplication for his manifold needs. Thus also is understood what our Lord expressly said, that the Psalms speak concerning Him (*S. Luke* xxiv. 44). And thus it was that throughout His earthly life He constantly took the words of the Psalter upon His lips, and made them the utterance of His own heart.

Thus we see what is the true purpose of the Psalter, and possess the key to its use. It is always in union with Jesus Christ, who offers in our nature the only adequate worship of the Father, that we are to recite these divine songs, if we would discover their deepest meaning. He is our great High Priest, ever acting in our behalf before the Father in heaven. It is He who speaks in the Psalms in all their varying phases. Sometimes it is in His own Name exclusively, as the eternal Word of the Father, and then His words, in their fullest meaning, fit Himself alone. We can only appropriate them so far as our union with Him makes us sharers in His greatness and His destiny. More often He speaks in the name of the Church, as the Head of His Body, adapting His language so that we too may make His words our own. He places Himself in every possible situation, and borrows the accents of His creatures. At one time He humbles Himself before the Father, asking pardon for our sins, which, as our Representative and Mediator, He

[1] Keble, *The Christian Year*, Third Sunday in Lent.

is bearing. At another, mindful of our weakness and our dangers, He calls on our behalf for help from above. Or again, as the Head of the new creation, He gives thanks and praise to the Father, and invites all creatures to join with Him in worship. Thus, throughout the Psalter, we find the expression of the experience and affections of Christ, both in Himself as the Head, and in His mystical Body, the Church. Herein lies the true power of the Psalter, and its universal appeal to all sorts and conditions of men. It suits every one because it is the utterance of the Incarnate Son of God, the only True Man, identifying Himself with us in bearing the consequences of our Fall, and teaching us, as we recite it, to claim our identification with Him, in the new covenant of grace and in the hope of glory.

We must be careful, then, ' not to dwarf the meaning of the Psalms to our own personal and changeful moods, but to recognize them as being the utterance of the Incarnate Son of God.' And we must recite them not as if we were external to Christ, but as those who are as truly one with Him by baptismal regeneration as He is one with the Father by eternal generation. We must therefore use these words of the Psalter, not as words spoken for some other purpose, which we can adapt to our own requirements, but as words provided by the Holy Ghost for the use of Christ and of us His members. ' We must lose ourselves in Christ. The words are primarily His, not ours.' Even the imprecations of the Psalms are no more private and personal than the protestations of innocence which startle us in other places. Both alike are the words of Christ and of the Church. They express the hatred of evil, whether in ourselves or in others, which should belong to the righteous. ' O ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the thing which is evil ' (*Ps.* xcvii. 10). They declare the Church's consciousness of a world-wide conflict ever proceeding between the cause of God and the passions of men urged on by the powers of evil.

And there is a still further meaning in many of the Psalms. They look beyond the present dispensation of the Spirit to ' the time of the end ' (*Dan.* xii. 4), to the revelation and destruction of antichrist, the restoration of Israel, the conversion of the nations, the second coming of our Lord, and His reign in manifested glory.

To say all this is not to decry the study of the literal and historical sense of the Psalms for other purposes. But when we are considering them from the point of view of prayer, as they are used in the Divine Office, the essential thing is not to determine questions of authorship or date, or the occasions on which they were written, nor to arrive at the exact meaning of certain words or phrases ; but to become penetrated with the meaning which they have for Christ and His Church, and to have our hearts enlightened and kindled as we say them in union with Him and in the power of the Holy Ghost.

For such a use of the Psalter the books that will most help us are not the commentaries of modern scholars, but the writings of the Fathers, above all of S. Augustine.[1] There are of course the great mediaeval commentators also, the cream of whose work is accessible in the commentary of Neale and Littledale. But these writers are not generally so helpful as the Fathers. Their interpretation is for the most part allegorical and typical rather than truly mystical, i.e. it does not rest so directly upon the great truth of our mystical union with Christ, which is what really enables us to say the Psalms in union with Him, and so to enter into their deepest meaning.

There are, however, one or two books of more recent date which may be helpful because based upon the same mystical principles which underlie the commentaries of the Fathers. These are, *A Translation and Exposition of the Psalms*, by the Rev. John Fry (Hamilton Adams & Co., London, 1842) ; *De Burgh on the Psalms*, Hodges Smith & Co., Dublin, 1860. Both these books interpret the Psalms very largely with reference to the second coming of our Lord. Father Benson's *War Songs of the Prince of Peace* (John Murray, London, 1901), especially three preliminary dissertations in the first volume, to which this instruction is greatly indebted, and an essay 'On the Epic Character of the Psalter' in the second. *The Christian Use of the Psalter*, by A. R. Whitham (Mowbray & Co.), especially Lecture II.

[1] Cf. *Enarr. in Ps.* lix (A.V. lx) 1. 'You will hardly find a word in the Psalms that is not spoken in the Name of Christ and the Church, either both jointly, or one of the two singly ; and if of the Church, then of each one amongst us.'

VI. MENTAL PRAYER

THERE are two main divisions of mental prayer, ordinary and extraordinary Ordinary mental prayer includes three stages or degrees, discursive meditation, affective prayer, and the prayer of simplicity. These are classed as ordinary, because the ordinary gifts of grace which God bestows on all well-disposed and faithful Christians are sufficient for their attainment and practice. Extraordinary prayer begins with the prayer of quiet, and passes on to various stages of contemplation, which are differently reckoned and named by different writers.

MEDITATION

This is the prayer proper for beginners, especially while they are in the purgative way. The purpose of this kind of prayer, in which, at all events at first, a large use is made of considerations and reflections, is to efface the thoughts and images of worldly and evil things, and to root in the mind and memory the great truths of the faith, the mysteries of our Lord's incarnate life, and the foundation principles of the spiritual life, so that these may not only give rise in the actual exercise of prayer to suitable affections, petitions, and resolutions, but may become the ruling principles of conduct at all times.

Until we have made some progress in this kind of meditation our faith may be orthodox, but it has little influence upon our life, because its truths remain upon the surface of the soul, and do not penetrate to its depths. But the regular practice of meditation brings these truths again and again into consciousness, fixes them in the memory, and teaches us to consider them in all their aspects and bearings till we get a thorough grasp of them. Thus little by little, they come to exert an effective influence upon our thoughts, and words, and actions. Faith becomes the ruling principle of the life, and gives it a supernatural character.

But when a person has practised discursive meditation for a longer or shorter period (for it varies greatly with different persons) the normal tendency is for the exercise of the will and the affections to gain ground more and more upon that of the understanding, so that there is no longer the same need for considerations, and the effort to go over them again and again becomes wearisome and distasteful. At the same time the will

is much more quick to catch fire, and break out into affections and petitions. When this stage is reached, then the simple remembrance of a truth, or the mere glance of the mind at some mystery of our Lord's life, at once brings back the concentrated essence of many considerations in past meditations which have been stored in the memory, or—shall we say?—in the subconscious mind. These do not come into consciousness distinctly and in detail one by one, but a general and combined fruit of them acts upon the will, and leads it at once to the production of affections.

Thus it is that meditation, by enriching the content and emotional power of our thoughts, while at the same time it simplifies them, makes lengthy considerations no longer necessary. The will and the affections are now quick to respond the moment any stimulus is presented to them, and often, it would seem, spontaneously at the mere suggestion or stirring of the Holy Spirit; and thus the soul is ready to pass on to a further stage of prayer, usually called affective prayer, or the prayer of immediate acts.

Affective Prayer

This kind of prayer is called affective prayer, because the exercise of the affections has now become predominant in it and is tending to become so more and more. It is also called the prayer of immediate acts, because the affections express themselves freely in a variety of acts, as of humility, contrition, love, faith, hope, adoration, resignation, and other virtues, which are produced immediately without any distinct or formal meditation going before them, but merely upon the bare remembrance of some mystery or truth, or in conformity with the present needs and aspirations of the soul.[1]

The signs of a soul's being ready to pass from meditation to affective prayer or the prayer of immediate acts of the will are principally the following:

1. A growing difficulty in meditation. Considerations no longer help, and if the soul forces herself to go on making them she finds only weariness and distaste. They have no effect now in kindling her affections, which, if left to themselves, are ready

[1] It is not always necessary to express these acts in words. Indeed often it would only hinder us to attempt to do so. The effort would only, as Father Benson says, 'throw the soul back upon its own incapacity, and make it despair of getting to God. If we will be content to look to Him as little children, He will draw out the powers of our intelligence to grasp His living truth by the inspiration of His holy love.' (See Introduction to *Benedictus Dominus*, p. xvi.)

to flow forth far more freely upon the mere remembrance of some truth or mystery of the faith.

2. A certain inward drawing to some new form of prayer, which as yet is not clearly known to her.

3. A fear to quit meditation, which she does know, in spite of the fact that it has become so dry and unprofitable.

4. When the soul has fairly entered upon the new way she finds therein both success and profit. The soul should succeed with the new exercise at least as well as she did with meditation, and it should excite in no less degree a desire for the practice of virtue. These two last, success and profit, are the most necessary signs that the soul has rightly made the change, and they are sufficient. If both the success and the profit are notably increased beyond what she found in meditation, it is all the evidence that can be needed.

The Prayer of Simplicity

But the course of ordinary mental prayer does not end here. As a soul perseveres in the prayer of acts or affections, her exercise will tend to become simpler and more uniform in character. At first her acts will probably be many in number and various in kind, and there will still be a certain limited use of the understanding and the imagination in making them. The soul still needs to strengthen her acts and affections by brief considerations or images in order to prolong their virtue and deepen their impression. Gradually, however, the acts and affections become stronger and independent of this help, because they become more spiritual, more purely acts of the naked will. At the same time they become simpler and fewer in number, because each lasts longer. Whereas at first the soul made use of a number and variety of acts and affections, such as humility, contrition, faith, hope, love, adoration, resignation, etc. ; now many of these acts no longer correspond to her present state, nor is she attracted to them. There is a tendency for a few, and often for a single one, to become predominant. Not that it is continuous to the exclusion of all others, but it returns again and again of its own accord. This constant recurrence of one principal thought or affection and a corresponding attraction to it, point to an increased action on the part of God. The soul has not yet entered upon extraordinary or passive prayer, but it may be approaching it.

Till quite recently it has been too much the tendency among us to consider discursive meditation as the only method of

mental prayer, and to urge it upon all souls alike. We are awaking now to the fact that this is not so. Many souls after a comparatively short time spent in meditation cease to profit by it, and are ready to advance to affective prayer and the prayer of simplicity, if only they knew about these further stages, and were helped and encouraged by their confessors or directors to go forward. M. Letourneau, in his book on the method of prayer taught at S. Sulpice, says, ' For want of a wise direction such souls may be kept in unsuitable ways of prayer for long years. They persist, in good faith, in trying to make a meditation every morning, when often meditation is useless to them, and morally impossible ; and many, understanding nothing of their condition, will end by acquiring a distaste for prayer altogether.' [1]

Likewise von Hügel says that for many souls ' a prayer of peacefully humble expectation and of all but inarticulate, practically indescribable, brooding of love, and of desire, expansive trust and conformity, is possible, sometimes alone possible, and is proved right and useful, if it leaves them strengthened to act and to suffer, to help and to devote themselves to their fellows, to Christ, and to God.' [2]

This indeed is always the ultimate test of a soul's being in a way of prayer suitable to it, and pleasing to God, viz. that it is growing thereby in solid virtues, especially in humility, patience, and charity.

[1] *La Méthode d'Oraison Mentale du Séminaire de Saint-Sulpice*, p. 222, n. Paris, 1903.

[2] *Mystical Element of Religion*, vol. ii, p. 136.

NOTE.—For a fuller Instruction on this subject see the present writer's paper, *The Normal Development of Ordinary Mental Prayer*, Mission House, Marston Street, Oxford. Price threepence.

VII. DISTRACTIONS IN PRAYER

One of the commonest difficulties we have to contend with in prayer, whether vocal or mental, is our distractions and wandering thoughts. Who among us does not suffer from this, and sometimes feel discouraged, as if his prayers were of little use and he would never learn to pray better? What is to be done?

I

First, let us remember that God does not require of us what we cannot do, and therefore involuntary distractions are not sinful. It is required of us that we should enter upon every act of devotion with the intention of applying our mind to it seriously, and should not knowingly and wilfully depart from that intention. But there is no art or device by which we can secure the permanence of our own attention. This is an ultimate fact of our mental constitution, which we cannot alter. We have no keeper of our attention other than attention itself; for our will can only act when attention is already awake. It is useless, then, to resolve that we will never be distracted. More or less we shall have to contend with distractions and wandering thoughts all our life long. Very likely this instability has been aggravated by our sins and carelessness in the past; still, for our comfort, let us remember that these distractions are not sinful now, if we are patiently trying to put them away. The very weariness and pain they cause us, if accepted humbly in a spirit of penance for our many faults, will turn to our spiritual profit.

On the other hand, we must be very much on our guard against indulging or acquiescing in distractions. That would be to make them directly sinful, and to spoil, *pro tanto*, all the good of our prayers. In other words, we must never for a single day give up the effort and hope to pray better, even though all our life we shall have to lament our failures.

II

It may help us to think of two classes of remedies corresponding to two sources of distractions.

1. *First, remedies which are general and remote.*

(1) The mind must be disciplined. A very large part of our distractions is due to the undisciplined state of our minds. We do not train them to habits of attention at other times, but allow them to be continually dissipated by idleness, gossip, curiosity to know and hear all sorts of trifling things. Then when we kneel down to pray, at once the imagination brings up everything that has occupied the mind during the preceding hours. This will be the case with every kind of prayer, but more especially with mental prayer. For when we try to empty the mind of other thoughts and images in order to fix it upon God, at once all sorts of distractions rush in to fill up the void. The actual time, then, of prayer is not the only time to fight against distractions. The more orderly, disciplined, and concentrated our minds are habitually, the more shall we be able to fix them upon God in prayer; and then such involuntary distractions as invade us will not destroy the reality of our prayer, for the will can remain united to God in spite of some wanderings of the mind and the imagination.

(2) And if the mind must be disciplined, the heart also must be purified. We cannot pray if we are not watching and striving against sin. If all day long we are given up to worldliness, love of pleasure, vanity, greed of money; if we indulge habitually in bitter, angry, or impure thoughts, then these same thoughts will beset our minds in times of prayer. Have we not noticed this, especially with regard to angry and ill-tempered or self-pitying thoughts, how they tend obstinately to persist, or to return again and again, in our prayers. *Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret.*

(3) Another help may be found in the practice of ejaculatory prayers. Faber says of these that 'they are, so to speak, the heavenly side of distractions, thoughts of God which distract us from the world, and interfere with the quiet possession which the world has taken of our souls. Ejaculations are doing for God what distractions do against

Him. They have a special virtue to evict distractions. There is no better practice for bringing them under our control.' [1]

2. *Secondly, remedies which are more direct and specific.*

(1) ' Before thou prayest, prepare thyself ' (*Ecclus.* xviii. 23). Do not turn at once from what you are doing and begin your prayer without a moment's pause for recollection. S. Ignatius advises that before our meditation we should stand one or two paces from the place in which we are about to meditate for the space of an *Our Father*, with our minds raised on high, considering how God our Lord sees us, and make an act of reverence or humiliation (Addition III).

The late Bishop Wilkinson, of St. Andrews, used to emphasize the same point. If, he said, you have only three minutes for prayer, one would be well spent in gathering up your thoughts and realizing the presence of God. Something of this sort may of course be done before every act of devotion, whether it be vocal prayer, or meditation, or the saying of our Office.

(2) Omit nothing that may conduce to reverence, whether in posture, or in circumstances of place and time. Lazy postures lead to lazy and unreal prayers, and often to drowsiness or sleep. Punctuality also is important. We shall always pray badly if we allow our regular times of prayer to be disarranged for all sorts of unnecessary trifles, or just because we feel disinclined, or want to do something else. What John Wesley called ' the lust of finishing ' may often be a snare : something that we want to finish, but which can quite well wait.

(3) If obliged to be out late at night, visiting or superintending clubs, etc., it is often best to make one's self-examination and say the greater part of one's night prayers at an earlier hour, before going out for the evening's work. Above all, do not let us put off saying our Office to a late hour when we are tired out, or let Offices accumulate upon us because we have not said them at the proper times.

(4) In the time of prayer itself, we must recall our thoughts as soon as we find them wandering. This will

[1] *Growth in Holiness*, p. 460

require a lively act of faith and trust in God. For instance, some happy thought about our work, the solution of some difficulty, some plan that promises well, may come into our mind and tempt us to follow out the suggestion. It will require faith to put it aside and commit it to God's keeping till our prayer is finished.

(5) Lastly, if our time of prayer has seemed to pass in a mere succession of fruitless efforts to put away wandering thoughts, we must not be discouraged nor think our efforts have been wasted. By means of that weary conflict God can teach us patience and humility; and all the time He is secretly pouring His grace into our souls, and, though we are not conscious of it at the time, we shall find afterwards that we have been calmed, enlightened, purified, and strengthened for all the duties and trials of the day.

VIII. INTERCESSION

INTERCESSION is incumbent upon all Christians. It is one of the primary laws of prayer, taught us by natural piety as well as by our Lord's express direction, for we cannot say the prayer He taught us without praying for others. But it is especially incumbent upon priests, in proportion as they have wider responsibilities, and are ordained for this purpose, amongst others, that they may be intercessors with God for the people.

Consider, in this respect, the example of S. Paul. In every letter he assures his converts that he intercedes for them. Writing to the Thessalonians, he says that 'night and day' he is 'praying exceedingly for them' (1 *Thess.* iii. 10); to the Colossians, that he is 'praying always' for them (i. 3); to the Philippians, that 'always in every prayer' of his for them all he is 'making intercession with joy' (i. 4). To the Romans he writes, 'God is my witness . . . that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers' (i. 9); to the Ephesians, 'I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers' (i. 16); to Timothy, 'without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day' (2 *Tim.* i. 3).

Ponder these words, and then think what an important and blessed work intercession is.

1. It is taking part in the work of Jesus at the right hand of God, and therefore it is a work full of power. Nothing we can do can effect such a change in others, for it brings to bear upon individuals the whole power of the work of Christ. We look around us, or in thought we can range over the wide world, beholding all the mass of sin and suffering there is, all the many, known and unknown to us, who need the grace of God; and here, in intercession, is a power adequate to all needs, inexhaustible, ever at hand.

2. It is a power which can reach everywhere. It causes the energy of Christ the Head to thrill through the whole

Body. We may not be great preachers, nor able to go abroad as missionaries, we may be set down in some very narrow sphere of work ; but intercession can reach everywhere. We can travel in thought all over the world, and pray for whatever needs we know of. Even our ignorance of circumstances does not limit the range of intercession. We can make a general intercession, e.g. Lord, have mercy upon India, or China, or Africa, or this or that city or town ; upon this or that class of persons, the poor, the rich, the suffering, the clergy, school teachers, nurses in hospitals, doctors, lawyers, artists, other professional men, soldiers, sailors, members of parliament, employers of labour, workers, those in temptation, the dying, the faithful departed, and God, who knows the needs of individuals, can make His grace reach just where it is needed.

3. It is a work full of blessing to those who practise it. Besides the blessing that belongs to all acts of communion with God, there is the promise, ' He that watereth shall be watered also himself ' (*Prov.* xi. 25). God will give great increase of love to those who diligently exercise this work of love.

4. Again, intercession has a great power to develop our faith. In intercession we are dealing altogether with supernatural powers which we cannot use except through the mediation of Christ. The use which we make of earthly means in the work of Christ is apt to blind us to our dependence upon God, by the visible results seeming to follow so naturally upon our endeavours ; but intercession carries the mind onward from the insufficiency of our own efforts to the intercession of Christ, which alone makes our efforts effectual. It is therefore entirely a work of dependent faith.

5. It is also a devotion peculiarly free from the danger of self-love, because its results are often so hidden. We pray for those at a distance, or whom we have never seen and very likely never shall see ; and even if we do sometimes see or hear of results, we feel how far beyond our own power they are to effect. Thus God is the more glorified because self is lost to sight

6. Lastly, it may be an unfailing source of interest and joy. Everything may furnish matter for it. We need never be idle for God so long as we have intercession to fall back upon. And as for joy, Faber says that joy is its special recompense. 'It is part of His joy, who rejoices in the harvest of His Passion. What stirs in our hearts has come to us from His. It was first in His, before it was in ours.' [1]

Methods of Intercession

The first thing is to place ourselves in the presence of God with a deep sense of our helplessness and unworthiness, making an act of contrition for our own sins. Next, we should call to mind the mediation of Christ as our only claim to be heard and the only power of our prayers, associating ourselves by faith with Him who gives us the right to pray in the prevailing power of His Name (*S. John* xvi. 23, 24, 26).

The matter of our intercessions may be arranged in several ways :

1. We can make two lists of persons and objects we want to pray for. The first will consist of those we want to pray for every day, at all events for a time. Such a list should not be stereotyped. It should reflect the changing circumstances and intercourse of our daily life and work. When, after a time, we take any name off this list, it is a good plan to put it into a general class not prayed for by name, e.g. 'All those for whom I have at any time prayed.'

The second list will be of persons and objects for whom we will pray once each week. A convenient way of arranging such a list might be to take a note book, and after heading the successive pages Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and so on, to write down the subjects we desire to pray for on each day. Thus, on *Sunday*, The Church and clergy ; *Monday*, The parish, the sick, penitents ; *Tuesday*, Universities, colleges, and schools ; *Wednesday*, Friends, relations, dependants ; *Thursday*, Religious, those preparing for the Sacraments, guilds, etc. ; *Friday*, Conversion of sinners, of the heathen, missions ; *Saturday*, The dying, the faithful departed. Under these general heads may be distributed any subdivisions we wish to make.

[1] *All for Jesus*, p. 133.

If the number of subjects we want to pray for becomes very large, we may distribute them so as to be gone through each fortnight or each month.

2. Again, we may divide the persons we pray for into various classes, e.g. (1) Communicants ; (2) Non-communicating church-goers ; (3) Those who never go to church ; (4) Open sinners, secret sinners, under the heads of the seven capital sins ; (5) The poor, the sick, the dying, etc.

In praying for the parish we may call to mind the various streets and roads, and intercede for the inhabitants. Those whose needs we know, we can pray for by name.

3. Lastly, we can use vocal prayers, such as the Our Father, the Penitential Psalms, the daily Office, the Rosary, all of them with various intercessory intentions. In the *Paradise of the Christian Soul* there are two Rosaries which might well be used in this way : the first is in memory of the seven blood-sheddings of our Lord, the second in honour of His five sacred wounds.[1]

But whatever method we adopt, let us remember that the power of our intercessions will depend mainly on a life of intimate personal communion with God. By our life of prayer and union with God we become channels through which grace can reach the persons and objects that need it.

Books useful as helps and encouragement in the work of intercession :

Eleven Addresses to the Companions of the Love of Jesus, Dr. Pusey. (J. Parker & Co., Oxford, 1868.)

All for Jesus, F. W. Faber, chap. iv.

A Study of Intercession, David Jenks, S.S.M.

Intercessory Manual, R. M. Benson. (Longmans, Green & Co.)

Sursum Corda (interleaved), Bishop of Truro and Mrs. Illingworth. (Mowbrays.)

Bands of Love. (Mowbrays.)

Preces Privatae, Bishop Andrewes.

[1] Part VI, pp. 94, 95. Ed. Dr. Pusey.

IX. THE PRIEST'S RULE OF LIFE

A RULE of life is not an arbitrary requirement for the priest who would worthily fulfil his sacred office and work. It is a requirement which every profession demands of those who would succeed, or at least apply themselves to their life work seriously. It sustains devotion, it guides enthusiasm, it safeguards purpose, it secures self-discipline.

And a priest has special need of a rule of life. He has mostly a very wide freedom in the way in which he will spend his time and exercise his ministry, and yet he is called to a very exacting standard. It is not difficult to live up to an external standard of ministerial life that may escape worldly or ecclesiastical censure, but the priest's true standard is the Priesthood of Jesus Christ Himself. The law of that Priesthood must be the law of his. A rule of life is to enable him to live more constantly in its vision, and more consistently true to it.

The priest's life has three spheres : his strictly sacerdotal life towards God, his pastoral life among his people, and his personal life in relation to Almighty God. His rule of life will cover all. In Jesus Christ we behold the great High Priest, the Shepherd of His people, and the Beloved Son of the Father. We are partakers of this threefold relationship of Him whose ministry on earth we are called to share.

I

The primary obligations of the priest are the recitation of the Divine Office and the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice. It is the responsibility of the Church on earth to utter that praise of God for which all creation is made. The foundation of the Church's praise is the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Mass therefore is the central action of our Christian worship, around which the Divine Office and all else is grouped.

Where it is possible the priest will endeavour to say

Mass daily. If it is not possible he will either attend Mass, or make privately an act of spiritual communion. By the saying of the Divine Office he contributes his own and his people's share in the utterance of the divine praises by the whole Body of Christ. His rule of life will have as its foundation these two duties.

II

The pastoral obligations of the Priest are his second care. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep, calls them forth by name, leads them out to pasture, guards them from the evil one, and lays down His life for them.

The priest's rule of life will be concerned with the visiting of his people and his individual knowledge of them ; with his teaching and preparation for teaching, in church and in class ; with his personal care for and ministration to their souls ; and with the setting aside for their sake of his own convenience, ease, pleasure, and self-regard.

It will cover therefore the arrangement of his day, the setting in order of his intercessions, the course of his study, the regularity and punctuality of his sacramental ministrations, his accessibility to his people, and his personal readiness to respond to their calls.

III

The personal life of the priest concerns both himself and his people. He cannot exercise his priesthood safely for himself, or profitably for his people, unless he is living in a true personal relationship to God in Christ. Prayer, penitence, communion with God, mortification, self-surrender are the essential elements of the priest's devotional life. He is to be himself a sacrifice to God in union with the Sacrifice of the beloved Son. He is to grow in spirituality, in holiness, and in the knowledge and love of God.

The priest's rule of life will therefore concern itself with his daily prayers and personal devotions ; with his practice of self-examination and confession, and the safeguards he must take against the particular sins that he is

most apt to commit; with his daily mental prayer; with his study of the revelation of God and the laws of spiritual life, in Holy Scripture and the writings of the saints; with the practice of the recollection of God by acts of spiritual communion, and ejaculatory prayer; with habits of self-discipline and self-denial, in a more constant aim at perfection; with conformity to the mind and spirit of Jesus Christ, and the acceptance under all conditions of the will of God, and of its accomplishment in the spirit of divine love.

Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. I am content to do it; Thy law is within my heart.

IV

The following summary of that which has been suggested in this instruction may serve as the basis of a rule that might strengthen the life of many a hard-pressed or lonely priest.

1. The faithful and reverent recitation of the Divine Office.

2. The daily offering of the Holy Sacrifice, or attendance at it. If that is not possible, at least an act of spiritual communion.

3. The setting apart of a definite time for systematic visiting every week, apart from special calls.

4. The setting apart of a fixed time for regular study every week.

5. At least half an hour of mental prayer daily.

6. A quarter of an hour of spiritual reading daily.

7. The regular practice of sacramental confession, if possible once a month or fortnight.

8. The making of an annual retreat.

9. The observance of some private rule of self-discipline.

10. The renewal every day of the aim of priestly perfection in union with the life and Sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Some useful Books on the Life and Duties of a Priest

Speculum Sacerdotum, W. C. E. Newbolt. (Longmans, 1894.)

Priestly Ideals, W. C. E. Newbolt. (Longmans, 1898.)

Priestly Blemishes, W. C. E. Newbolt. (Longmans.)

The Eternal Priesthood, Cardinal Manning. (Burns & Oates.)

The Personal Life of the Clergy, A. W. Robinson. (Longmans, 1902.)

Clerical Life and Work, H. P. Liddon. (Longmans, 1895.)

The Priest in his Inner Life, H. P. Liddon. (J. Masters, 1882.)

The Priest, his Character and Work, J. Keatinge. (Kegan Paul & Co., 1903.)

The Priestly Vocation, Right Rev. Bernard Ward. (Longmans, 1918.)

My Priesthood, W. J. Carey. (Longmans, 1915.)

Priesthood in Liturgy and Life, A. H. Baverstock. (Faith Press, 1917.)

The Parish Priest of the Town, J. Gott. (S.P.C.K., 1887.)

Pastoral Work in Country Districts, V. S. S. Coles. (Longmans, 1906.)

The Priest's Studies, T. B. Scannel. (Longmans, 1908.)

Handbooks for the Clergy, Ed. A. W. Robinson. (Longmans, 1902, 1903, 1909.)

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X. RULES FOR MAKING A GOOD ELECTION

Preamble

'In every good election, so far as regards our part, the eye of our intention ought to be single, looking only to the end for which I am created, viz. for the praise of God our Lord, and the salvation of my soul. Therefore whatever I choose ought to be for this, that it may help me towards the end for which I am created; not ordering or drawing the end to the means, but the means to the end. As, for example, it happens that many first choose to marry, which is a means, and in the second place to serve God our Lord in the married state, which service of God is the end. In the same way there are others who first desire to possess benefices, and then to serve God in them. So that these persons do not go straight to God, but rather wish that God should come straight over to their inordinate affections; and consequently they make of the end a means, and of the means an end, so that what they ought to choose first they choose last. For first we ought to make it our object to desire to serve God, which is the end; and secondarily to accept the benefice, or to marry (if that should be more fitting for me), which is the means to the end. Nothing therefore ought to move me to take such means, or to deprive myself of them, except only the service and praise of God our Lord, and the eternal salvation of my soul.'

These principles may, of course, be applied to any matter about which we have to make an Election.

S. Ignatius speaks of 'Three times in each of which a sound and good Election may be made.' They are called 'times' because it is when the soul is in one or other of the conditions here described that a good Election can be made.

1. The first time is when God so moves and attracts the soul that it neither doubts nor can doubt what He would have it do. In this way S. Matthew, S. Paul, and some other saints were called by our Lord. Such vocations, however, are rare and extraordinary, and must not be asked for, nor expected, from God.

2. The second, is when God makes His will sufficiently clear by the experience of consolation or desolation in the soul, while it views the matter concerning which it has to decide. In this second time the retreatant should not enter into much reasoning or discourse within himself. Rather he should simply observe the movements of his soul, seeking to know which of them come from God and which from himself or from an evil spirit, and praying for light and grace to do God's will, whatever it may cost him (*Directory* xxx. 5, 6).

In perplexity or temptation he may be helped by a wise and prudent director who will explain to him, if need be, the rules given by S. Ignatius for the discernment of spirits.

3. The third time is when the soul in calm and tranquility, and praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, uses mainly its natural powers of reason and conscience. This is the most usual and in some ways the safest method, and indeed it should generally be used to confirm or revise a decision reached in the second time.

For our procedure in this third time S. Ignatius gives two methods.

The First Method

1. Set clearly before you the matter for deliberation with all its attendant circumstances.

2. Calling to mind the purpose of your creation, viz. the glory of God and your own salvation, and holding your will in a state of equilibrium, be ready to make whatever decision you shall feel to be more for the glory of God and the salvation of your soul.

3. Pray God to move your will and enlighten your mind that you may know what He would have you do, and may have grace to choose aright.

4. Count up the reasons for and against the decision you feel drawn to make, and in like manner the reasons for and against the opposite decision, in both cases writing them down on paper over against each other.

5. Having done this, weigh the advantages and disadvantages on either side, and decide according to the

preponderating weight of reason and faith, and not according to any merely natural inclination.

6. Then, with diligent prayer offer your decision or resolution to God, begging Him to accept and confirm it, if it should be according to His will. If during this prayer any doubts about the soundness of your decision should arise, they should be examined in the light of the rules for the discernment of spirits ; and if seen to be ill-founded they should be set aside and the decision already made should be adhered to. Otherwise the Election should be made afresh. See *Directory* xxxi, xxxii.

The Second Method

This takes the form of four heads for self-examination.

1. Do I honestly think that the decision or resolution I propose to make is according to the will of God, and will be for His glory and the good of my soul ? Or am I really moved by other considerations, such as ambition, pleasure, ease, or self-love in any form ; or, if it is a question of something difficult to nature, am I held back by the flesh or the world, though I believe in my heart and conscience that God is calling me to do the hard thing ?

2. If I were advising another for whose soul I was responsible, or for whose spiritual good and salvation I greatly cared, what would my advice be ? Whatever I would say to that person I ought to say to myself.

3. If I were on my death-bed what should I then wish that I had done about this matter ?

4. How will it appear to me when I stand before the judgement-seat of Christ ? How shall I then view the choice I am now about to make ?

In the light of these reflections, so simple and yet so sure in their application, I will make my decision.

5. Lastly, as in the former method, I will offer my decision or resolution to God, praying Him to accept and bless it.

Either or both of these methods may be used, but the second is simpler and perhaps more suitable when only an ordinary retreat resolution has to be made.

Method of Amending and Reforming one's Present Life and State

If any one is already placed in a state of life which is fixed and unchangeable, or if he does not feel any special call to change his state, though in itself it may be capable of being changed, it is often useful to consider whether any reform is needed or advisable in the various details of one's life and use of creatures.

In order to arrive at a right conclusion in such matters one should examine, by means of the above rules for Election, the details of one's life and circumstances one by one, in order to see how they may be better directed to the true end, the glory of God and one's own advancement in spiritual life. See *Directory* xxxiv.

As S. Ignatius begins his instructions on the Election by referring to the great foundation principle of the end or purpose of our creation, so he ends with still another principle which is of the highest importance not only for making a good Election, but also for attaining perfection in whatever state of life God may call us to serve Him. *Let each*, he says, *reflect that he will make progress in all spiritual matters just so far as he shall have divested himself of his self-love, self-will, and self-interest.* It is to this victory over ourselves that the whole course of the Exercises is directed as their proximate and immediate end. For if this fruit is obtained, the ultimate end, which is the glory of God and our own salvation and perfection, will certainly follow, and that in proportion as the struggle and the victory over self has been more generous and more complete. (Cf. *Imitation of Christ* I. xxv. 3.) 'One thing there is that draws many back from progress and zealous amendment: dread of difficulty, or the toil of strife. For in truth they above all others grow best in all virtues, who struggle like men to overcome those things which are hardest and most contrary unto them. For there a man improves most, and earns greater grace, where most he conquers himself and mortifies himself in spirit.'

XI. SPIRITUAL ADVANCE

Our life in this world is intended for spiritual training and advance. If we do not advance we shall decline and fall away. These are the two alternatives, and the length to which human character may go in either direction is almost infinite. It may sink to appalling depths of evil, or it may rise to marvellous heights of sanctity, developing through grace that gift of divine life the germ of which was implanted in it at baptism.

The particular judgement at the moment of death will reveal to us in which direction we have been moving; and the general judgement at the last day will show the extent to which we have gone in either way, and the measure of the reward to which we have attained or the loss we have incurred.

Consider, then, the advance of which the soul is capable and to which God calls it. It is important to consider this because one great source of weakness and failure in our spiritual life is that we do not think enough of the spiritual powers with which we are endowed. We do not set our aims and hopes high enough, not recognizing to the full the supernatural character of our life in Christ. We may know theoretically what the spiritual life is and may grow to be, as we see it depicted in the pages of the New Testament or in the lives of the saints, yet we often have no practical belief in its possibility for ourselves, and so make no efforts to advance towards it.

Holy Scripture continually reminds us of the great capacities for spiritual growth there are within us, and urges us to develop them. 'Ye shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (*S. Matt.* v. 48). God 'hath chosen us in Christ, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love' (*Eph.* i. 4); 'As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, ye shall be holy; for I am holy' (1 *S. Pet.* i. 15, 16). 'Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be; but we know

that when He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure' (1 *S. John* iii. 2, 3).

If we meditate upon such words we are startled as we penetrate their full meaning, and then perhaps are tempted to water them down as if they cannot be meant to be taken in their full force. How can we with our manifold weaknesses and hindrances, and in the midst of such a world as this, hope to attain to such spiritual perfection?

But is not this to forget what the Christian life really is? Certainly it is not a life possible to unaided nature. It is a supernatural life, an altogether new life implanted in us, the very life of Christ imparted to us and energizing within us. He is the vine, we the branches. As truly as the branches live with the life of the vine, so do we with the life of Christ. In Christ we are made 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 *S. Pet.* i. 4). In Holy Communion we are fed and sustained by fresh gifts of His life. 'He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him' (*S. John* vi. 56). Christ and His people are one: they live with one life. So true is this that our Lord can compare it to the unity of His own life with that of the Father. 'As I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me' (ibid. 57). This life does not admit of incompleteness in itself. However imperfect in its manifestation, however liable to forfeiture, life cannot be given save in its integrity.

Think, then, what it is to have this substantial union with Christ, this real identity of life with Him. What limits can we set to its power, if we yield ourselves to it! Surely we ought to have more spiritual ambition than most of us have! We ought to have more faith and greater hope. Contrast our poor ambitions and feeble hopes with the language even of the Old Testament, especially in the Psalter. What an experience of intimacy with God and longing for Him the Psalms reveal! What depths of penitence, and what heights of aspiration! 'My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?' (*Ps.* xlii. 2). 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee; and there is none upon earth

that I desire in comparison of Thee' (*Ps.* lxxiii. 24). Or, returning to the New Testament, think of S. Paul's prayers for his converts and the kind of things he asks for them: that God would 'grant them, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith; that, being rooted and grounded in love, they might be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fullness of God' (*Eph.* iii. 16–19. See also *Eph.* i. 16–23; *Phil.* i. 9–11; *Col.* i. 9–12; 1 *Thess* v. 23; 2 *Thess.* i. 11, 12). It would be good sometimes to take these prayers of S. Paul for our meditation, and learn from them what are the things we should pray for, and hope for, both for ourselves and for our penitents.

And further, there appears at the present time to be a marked increase in the number of persons who desire to make progress in the spiritual life and in prayer. Many are being led beyond the stage of discursive meditation to the practice of affective prayer and to the prayer of simplicity.[1] We ought to be learning something of these higher stages of prayer ourselves. We may learn something from books, e.g. the treatise on prayer in Father Baker's *Holy Wisdom*; Lehodey's *The Ways of Mental Prayer*; Saudreau's *The Degrees of Spiritual Life*; Père de Besse's *The Science of Prayer*. Such books may open to us a vision of new possibilities in prayer, and will show us the normal course which advance in the life of prayer will take. But books can only help us theoretically. The real possibilities of advance in prayer can only be learnt by experience. We must practise mental prayer ourselves. Then we shall come to know with a real knowledge, which will not only be the greatest blessing to ourselves but will also help us to instruct and guide others.

We must of course be careful to lay the foundations strong and sure. These are humility, purity, and self-discipline. Without these, advance would be insecure and illusory. But we need not wait till we have attained the perfection of these virtues. If we are beginning to practise

[1] See Instruction vi.

them in earnest it will probably not be long before God invites us to some higher ways of prayer beyond the practice of discursive meditation ; and this advance in prayer will raise the whole character of our spiritual life to a higher level. The practice of virtue and progress in prayer act and react upon one another, so that normally there should be a simultaneous growth of each.

We must not, then, be content to remain always on the threshold of the spiritual life, when perhaps God is opening the door and inviting us to advance within. We must realize the possibilities of spiritual advance which are held out to us, and desire to have a deeper knowledge of the ways of interior prayer, in order that we may not only make progress in the way of perfection ourselves, but also be able to help those under our care.

XII. ON GOING OUT OF RETREAT

THE following advice, taken mainly from the *Directorium in Exercitia*, Cap. xl, will be found useful.

'Just as when a man goes out of a warm place into a cold one he may easily and quickly become chilled, unless he takes good care to maintain the heat that is in him; so nothing is easier than for one who at the close of the Exercises returns to his ordinary life and conversation, to lose in a very short time the fervour and light which he has gained. And there is a special danger of this because whatever good he has gained is not yet confirmed so as to become habitual, but is rather of the nature of an emotion, which is easily weakened, or even altogether lost. And when this happens, all the labour and all the fruit of the Exercises is lost.

'Therefore the first piece of advice to be given to one who has finished the Exercises is that he should set a high value upon this beginning and foundation of a spiritual life, which, by the grace of God, he has laid in his retreat, and should accept it as a great benefit bestowed upon him by God, yea the greatest of all benefits, and should firmly believe that all the lights and all the knowledge which he has gained in the Exercises have been bestowed upon him by God our Lord with a particular individual love, and that as such he should study to preserve and guard them. Let him moreover fear, lest, if hereafter he does not live as he has come to know that he ought to live, he should be the more severely punished by God for his ingratitude, and because greater condemnation is due to one who knows what is good and does it not.

'And secondly, let him understand that he has as yet done nothing except to receive the good seed sown by God in his soul, and that unless this seed is cherished and cultivated, so as to come to maturity and bear fruit in due time, it is of itself little or nothing. This therefore ought to be his

first care, not to let the good seed be snatched away by the birds, that is by evil spirits, or choked by the thorns, viz. earthly and corrupt thoughts and desires. Therefore let him avoid not only sins, but also the occasions of them, especially of those to which he was prone before making the Exercises, for it is against these that he ought most of all to arm himself, since it is so easy to fall back into them.

'Thirdly,[1] he should be exhorted to preserve and cherish, by pious and spiritual exercises, the devotion he has now gained. Amongst such exercises the following may be especially commended : first, that he should maintain the practice of meditating daily for half an hour, if possible. Secondly, that he should make an examination of conscience every day. Thirdly, that he should confess and communicate regularly. Fourthly, that he should choose some good confessor and take him for his guide, treating with him of everything that concerns his soul. Fifthly, that he should daily read a portion of Holy Scripture, and of some spiritual book such as the *Imitation of Christ*, *The Devout Life* by S. Francis de Sales, the *Spiritual Combat*, etc. Sixthly, that he should draw up a suitable rule of life, and endeavour to keep it exactly. Seventhly, that he should endeavour daily to advance in virtues, especially humility, patience, and charity. And in fine, that he should strive after the highest perfection which, in his state of life, and according to the measure of divine grace given him, he is able to acquire.'

To this advice given in the *Directorium* a few more words may be added, by way of caution :

A retreat is often a time of spiritual strain, and there may be a danger of reaction on coming out of it. The retreatant should be on his guard against this, endeavouring to preserve a spirit of calmness and recollection. The warm and exalted feelings he may have had during the retreat will die away quietly of themselves. They were not meant to last. They were given for a time and for a special purpose : to help him to make a new start, or to do some difficult thing. When their work is done they will

[1] This paragraph has been slightly altered from the original.

pass away. But the lasting fruit of the retreat will be preserved in the resolutions he has made, and perseveres in carrying out. They should therefore be written down and read over from time to time, lest they should be forgotten, and they should be put into practice without delay.

APPENDIX III

PLANS FOR EIGHT ADDITIONAL RETREATS

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RETREAT V

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For a three days' retreat, omit meditations viii, ix, x ; or iv, ix, x.

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For a three days' retreat, omit meditations iii, ix, xi ; or iv, viii, xiii.

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For a three days' retreat, omit meditations i, vii, x ; or i, viii, xii.

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For a three days' retreat, omit meditations iii, vi, xiii ; or iv, ix, xii.

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For a three days' retreat, omit meditations iv, vii, viii; or vii, viii, xi.

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NOTE.—Other combinations may easily be made by any one who has studied the *Spiritual Exercises*. Many also of the meditations in my former book, *Ignatian Retreats for Lay People* (Mowbrays, 1926), may be used by priests, so that a still greater variety of retreats can be arranged.

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